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PRIMROSE WAS HER NAME

Fairy Tales for the Schoolroom

A Collection of Carefully Selected
Short Stories

BY

VARIOUS AUTHORS

Illustrated in Colour and Black-and-white

THE GRESHAM PUBLISHING COMPANY LTD.
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FAIRY TALES FOR THE SCHOOLROOM

Hickamore and Hackamore

Hickamore, Hackamore, on the King's kitchen door.
All the King's horses and all the King's men
Could not get Hickamore, Hackamore
Off the King's kitchen door.

There was once upon a time a very gloomy King, who lived in a very gloomy castle.

The castle had very thick walls, and very small windows that were never opened. It was surrounded on three sides by a dense forest of pine trees, which grew close up to the castle, even up to the front door. On the fourth side there was only a low hedge, and from the kitchen door stretched a wide avenue, leading to the plain where stood the nearest city.

The King, of course, never went to the kitchen door, and hardly knew of the existence of the wide avenue, or of the city. He sat all

day long looking out at the dark, gloomy pine trees in front of the castle, and he was always lonely and always sad. The Lord High Chamberlain and all the lords and ladies-in-waiting had rooms in front of the castle too, and they were all as gloomy as could be.

The only really merry person in the whole castle was the Kitchen-maid; but then she did her work by the open kitchen door, and often went down the avenue to the city to hear the news.

One fine April morning two dancing little strangers, dressed in bright colours, came running up the avenue from the city to the King's castle. Instead of going to the front door, as strangers usually did, they came bouncing, bounding along to the open kitchen door, jumped one on to the knocker and the other on to the door handle, and began kicking at it with all their might.

“Whoever are you?” said the Kitchen-maid, who was cleaning the boots in the doorway.
“And what do you want?”

“I’m Hickamore,” said one, standing on his head on the door handle.

“I’m Hackamore,” said the other, turning a somersault through the knocker.

“And we both want to see the King,” said

they both together, and then they began to run up and down the door with all their might.

The Kitchen-maid did not seem at all surprised at this extraordinary behaviour. She began to laugh merrily, and said:

“ Well, you won’t see the King if you stay where you are. You will have to go round to the front door.”

“ But we are not going round to the front door,” said they, “ and we *are* going to stay where we are, and we *must* see the King.” They ran up and down the kitchen door faster than ever, now here, now there—bright spots of colour against the brown wood.

At this the little Kitchen-maid laughed more merrily than ever, and so loud that she attracted the attention of the Head Cook, who was busy cooking the King’s favourite dish of stewed prunes.

“ What’s the matter?” said he.

“ Oh,” said the Kitchen-maid, as well as she could for laughing, “ it’s Hickamore and Hackamore, and they are on the King’s kitchen door, and they want to see the King.”

“ Why don’t they go round to the front door, then?” said the Head Cook.

“ They don’t want to,” said the Kitchen-maid.

The Head Cook was so astonished that, spoon in hand, he came out into the passage to see the two strangers. They were still running up and down the kitchen door as fast as ever they could. No sooner had the Head Cook set eyes on them than he burst out laughing.

“Good gracious me!” said he, and raised the big wooden spoon that he was carrying and waved it in the air.

At this moment a Pageboy, who was coming into the kitchen to fetch the King’s pudding, arrived at the other end of the passage. He was a gloomy youth, with perfectly straight hair. When he saw the Head Cook at the kitchen door, waving his spoon in the air and laughing, he stood still, with his mouth wide open, in astonishment.

“What’s the matter?” said he.

“It’s Hickamore and Hackamore,” said the Head Cook, waving his spoon in the air more wildly than ever, “and they are on the King’s kitchen door, and they want to see the King.”

“Why don’t they go round to the front door, then?” asked the Pageboy, coming forward.

“They don’t want to,” said the Head Cook.

By this time the Pageboy too had come to the kitchen door. Hickamore and Hackamore were still running up and down it with all

their might. No sooner did the Pageboy set eyes on them than *he* began to roar with laughter, and all his straight hair began to curl.

“Well I never!” said he.

All this time the King was waiting for his dish of stewed prunes, and a Lady-in-Waiting was sent down to the kitchen to tell the Pageboy to hurry. She was a very gloomy lady, with stiff, starched petticoats, and very stiff knees. As she came into the passage she saw the Pageboy standing at the kitchen door, doubled up with laughter, his hair curling all over his head!

“Whatever *is* the matter?” said she very stiffly.

“Oh dear me! It is Hickamore and Hackamore!” said the Pageboy. “And they are on the King’s kitchen door, and they want to see the King.”

“Why do not they go to the front door, then?” said the Lady-in-Waiting, still more stiffly.

“They don’t want to,” laughed the Page.

The Lady-in-Waiting walked slowly down the passage to see the two queer strangers. Hickamore and Hackamore had never ceased running up and down the kitchen door as fast as ever they could go.

No sooner had the Lady-in-Waiting set eyes on them than *she* began to laugh. All the stiff-

ness went out of her petticoats, and out of her knees. She took the curly-haired Page round the waist, and danced with him all the way up the passage, and at the end of it they collided—bump!—with no less a personage than the Lord High Chamberlain himself, who had come down in person to see why the King had not yet got his stewed prunes.

“I beg your pardon,” said the Lady-in-Waiting, but she did not stop laughing.

“What is the matter?” said the Lord High Chamberlain, who was a terribly gloomy person, almost as gloomy as the King himself.

“If you please,” said the Lady-in-Waiting, “it is Hickamore and Hackamore, and they are on the King’s kitchen door, and they want to see the King.”

“Let them be shown round to the front door, then!” said the Lord Chamberlain in his most pompous manner.

“But they don’t want to,” said the Lady-in-Waiting, heedless of grammar.

“They will *have* to want to,” answered the Lord High Chamberlain, striding down the passage to the kitchen door.

Hickamore and Hackamore had now resumed their original positions. One was standing on his head on the door handle, and the other

was turning somersaults very fast through the knocker. For one whole minute the Lord High Chamberlain stared gloomily at them. Then, very slowly, a smile began to appear on his face. The smile grew broader and broader, and then—"Ha! Ha! Ha!" laughed he.

Then he gathered up his robes and skipped—yes, actually skipped!—along the passage and upstairs to see the King.

He was followed by the Lady-in-Waiting, the Pageboy, and the Head Cook; but the Kitchen-maid stayed where she was, and went on cleaning the boots, and Hickamore and Hackamore began to run up and down the kitchen door again just as if nothing had happened.

All this time the King had been waiting in the banqueting-hall for his dish of stewed prunes. The banqueting-hall was very long, very low, and very dark. The pine trees pressed close up against the windows, which were shut. The King sat at the end of the long banqueting-table with his head buried in his hands. He was surrounded by pages, courtiers, and ladies-in-waiting. They were all very gloomy and stiff, and kept their eyes fixed on the ground.

No one spoke a word.

Suddenly the door at the other end of the room burst open, and in skipped the Lord High

Chamberlain! Behind him danced the Lady-in-Waiting, and her petticoats were soft and clinging! Behind her capered the Pageboy, and his hair curled all over his head! Behind him leapt the Head Cook, brandishing his wooden spoon in the air!

The King looked up without a smile on his face. The courtiers stared. The room, somehow, looked gloomier than ever.

Almost imperceptibly the Lord High Chamberlain dropped into a walk. The Lady-in-Waiting seemed to feel her knees growing stiff again. The Pageboy's hair began to uncurl. The Head Cook dropped his spoon with a clatter.

"Where are my prunes?" said the King wearily.

The Head Cook fled. So did the Page. So did the Lady-in-Waiting, shutting the door after her.

The Lord High Chamberlain stood alone in the middle of the floor, fidgeting from one foot to the other. None spoke a word.

"Well?" said the King at last.

"Please, Your Majesty," began the Lord High Chamberlain, "it is Hickamore and Hackamore, and they are on your kitchen door, and they want to see you."

“Let them come round to the front door, then.”

“They don’t want to.”

Another long silence.

“Send all my horses and all my men to fetch them!”

The Lord High Chamberlain bowed and left the room to find the General Commanding.

Immediately afterwards the Page appeared carrying the dish of stewed prunes. His hair was quite straight again. The Lady-in-Waiting followed him, and her knees were as stiff as ever, but there was yet a hint of laughter in her eyes.

Meantime the little Kitchen-maid was still busy cleaning the boots, and Hickamore and Hackamore were enjoying themselves thoroughly on the kitchen door.

Presently along the avenue came the tramp, tramp, tramp, of horses’ hoofs. The Kitchen-maid looked up from her work, and laughed more merrily than ever. Two and two they came—all the King’s horses and all the King’s men! The General Commanding rode in front of them on a beautiful white horse.

Hickamore and Hackamore paid not the slightest attention to any of them, but began an

elaborate game of "Catch" up and down the King's kitchen door.

All the King's horses and all the King's men
came nearer and nearer, and finally drew up



The General Commanding rode in front

in two long lines just opposite the kitchen door. A herald blew a long blast upon his trumpet. The General Commanding approached the kitchen door and saluted.

“We have come to escort you to the front door,” said he; and then, all of a sudden, he began to roar with laughter, and his white horse under him started prancing and curveting in the most absurd manner imaginable.

Hickamore and Hackamore stopped their game of “Catch”, and sat quite still side by side on the knocker, winking at the General. He raised his hand. This was the signal for arrest in those parts.

Four of the King’s horses and four of the King’s men approached to arrest Hickamore and Hackamore, but directly they set eyes upon the two little strangers the men began to laugh, and the horses grew so unmanageable that they could not get anywhere near the door!

Hickamore and Hackamore were still winking at the General. He held up his hand again, and another four horses and men came forward to try their luck—with the same result. And so it went on. Every single horse and man had tried to get Hickamore and Hackamore off the King’s kitchen door and had failed. There they still sat on the knocker, winking.

Then the men tried to dismount, so as to catch Hickamore and Hackamore on foot; but the horses all seemed bewitched, and they found it quite impossible.

The Lord High Chamberlain, who had been looking on at the whole scene from a top window, gave a signal to the General. All the King's horses and all the King's men retired, tramp! tramp! tramp! tramp! the way they had come.

The Kitchen-maid went on with her boots again, and Hickamore and Hackamore started to run up and down the kitchen door just as if nothing had happened.

The Lord High Chamberlain once more came into the presence of the King.

"Your Majesty," said he, "it is no use. All your horses and all your men cannot get them off the kitchen door!"

A long silence.

"Who saw them first?" asked the King.

"The Kitchen-maid," said the Lord High Chamberlain.

"Bring her here!" said the King.

In a few minutes the little Kitchen-maid was ushered into the royal presence. She was rosy and fresh, and she was still laughing.

"Who are these strangers?" said the King.

“Why, they are only two little sunbeams!” said the Kitchen-maid.

The King stared.

“How can I bring them here?” he asked her.

“Cut down the pine trees all round the castle, and open the windows, and you will see them in a twinkling,” said she.

“Thank you!” said the King. Then, turning to the Lord High Chamberlain, and speaking in a loud clear voice so that all might hear, he said:

“Cut down the pine trees all round the castle, and open the windows!”

The Lord High Chamberlain bowed and left the room. Then began such a hacking and a hewing and a sawing and a splitting as never was heard in all that countryside! Everyone from the city—indeed, from the kingdom, came to help.

The pages and courtiers and ladies-in-waiting went to open the windows, and very stiff they found them.

At last every tree was down and every window opened. The sun streamed into the banqueting-hall.

The King rose from his throne like a man in a dream. All the Court followed him. The exercise of opening the windows had made them

all much less stiff and gloomy than before. The King went slowly down to the front door. He opened it.

In bounced Hickamore and Hackamore one after the other!

“We have come in to see you at last!” said they, and danced about his crown.

The door stood wide open. As the King looked out he thought he could see lots of other little Hickamores and Hackamores at their merry antics on the grass. Then he threw back his head and laughed aloud.

“Ha! ha! ha! Let us join them!” said he.

Out on to the lawn he danced with all his Court after him, and the servants too. Never were seen such curly-headed pageboys, such dainty, lively ladies-in-waiting, such merry cooks, above all such a jovial Lord High Chamberlain, and such a fresh, rosy, smiling little Kitchen-maid!

Among them all, here, there, and everywhere, danced Hickamore and Hackamore.

And the little Kitchen-maid was quite right, for they were only two little sunbeams!

Ada Marzials.

The Picture Curtain

Once upon a time there was a girl called Jeannette, and she had a dear little bedroom of her very own. It had a small mantelpiece where she kept her treasures, a shelf where her best books stood in a row, and a tiny white bed with a frilly pillow-case. She was a very lucky girl, for her mummy had let her choose every single thing she liked best; so her carpet was blue, her furniture was white, and her curtains had pictures on them.

Jeannette liked her curtains. There was a funny little girl on them in a very splendid frock, and she was looking up at a beautiful blue peacock in a tree, and trying to catch some blossom which kept falling, falling down. Just behind the tree there was a little round pond, and across a smooth green lawn a lovely princess was coming down the steps from her castle, followed by a very strange-looking servant who was holding her train.

Jeannette used to wonder, as she lay in bed, what the story of the picture was; and one

evening, when she had been gazing at it for ever such a long time, she said to herself aloud: "Oh dear! how I *would* like to go into that garden! It does look so lovely!" And then she grew drowsy, for it was getting late, and in a few minutes she had fallen asleep.

It did not appear very long to Jeannette before she seemed to be awakened by a little sound, rather like somebody talking very softly. She listened, and then looked up. Outside, a great big moon was sending a beautiful shine into her room and lighting up the picture on the chintz curtain, and to Jeannette's great surprise the girl by the tree had quite left off looking up at the peacock, and was sitting down and looking straight at Jeannette.

"Oh dear!" said a little soft voice. "How I would like to go into that bedroom! It does look lovely!"

Jeannette sat up in bed. "Hullo!" she said in a whisper.

The girl nodded and smiled. "I was just saying," she said, "that I think it must be lovely in your room."

"And I was saying, just a little while ago, that I think it must be lovely in your garden," answered Jeannette. The girl nodded again.

"Well," she said, "if you'd let me come into

your room I'd be very glad to ask you into my garden. Take my hand."

Jeannette stood up, and with one little jump she found herself standing beside the tree, and when she looked down there was the picture-curtain girl in her room, smiling at herself in the glass. Jeannette looked up to find the peacock, but he certainly was not in the tree now; so she went over the dewy lawn to the pond, which was shining like silver in the moonlight, and then she ran from one rose bush to another, for never had she been in such a glorious garden before.

All at once she heard the sound of music, and, looking towards the palace, she saw the lovely princess just coming down the steps, followed by a great many grand people, and in a moment they all began to dance in the moonlight.

Jeannette loved dancing, so she joined in and began to step round with the guests. Suddenly the peacock came waltzing by, and he made a low bow to Jeannette and said: "May I dance with you?" So off they went together, the peacock showing off his beautiful tail. As Jeannette had never danced with a bird before, she was not sure what steps she ought to do, so she made up a little dance of her own, and went turning and twisting and curtsying to the peacock, until



they waltzed right up the steps of the palace and into a great hall hung with coloured fairy lamps and bunches of grapes, where, on marble tables, a most wonderful meal was spread.

Jeannette and the peacock had supper together, and the beautiful princess came and said: "How do you do?" and everyone said: "What a lovely frock that little girl has on!" and all the time it was only a nightie! Then the princess said: "I think you look so nice with no shoes on!" So she and all the guests took off their shoes and stockings and began to dance like Jeannette, who felt she would like to scream with laughter to see such strange things happening.

“Come along!” said the peacock, and away they danced again until they found themselves beside the little round pond, where a silver boat was waiting.

“Perhaps you had better be going now,” said the peacock, and, though Jeannette hadn’t the least idea where she was going, she stepped into the boat, and it began to float away; and then, all at once, it wasn’t a boat any more, but her own little bed.

The picture girl came and sat beside her. “I’ve had such a lovely time,” said she. “I’ve done my hair with your brush, and I’ve tried on your party shoes and your blue sash, and I’ve been playing with your big doll. Good night!”

When Jeannette awoke the next morning she sat up and rubbed her eyes and looked at the picture on the curtain. There was the girl by the tree, and the peacock, and the branches, and the blossom falling down.

“Can it have been a dream?” said Jeannette. “I do hope not!” She jumped out of bed and ran over to her little white wardrobe, and then she felt quite sure it had not been a dream, for her party shoes were out of their box, her blue sash was in the wrong drawer, and her big doll Dulcie was looking very much upset, and dreadfully sleepy.

Natalie Joan.

The Fairy Bean

The Story of a Twelfth-Night Party

There was a letter lying on Anne's plate when she came down to breakfast; it was the very first letter she had ever had, and she could hardly believe that it was really and truly for her.

"May I open it?" she asked shyly.

"Of course, my dear." Granny looked over the top of her glasses at the little girl and smiled.

Uncle Dick smiled too, and so did Anne as she tore the envelope very carefully. Then she gave a little gasp of delight as she read, and Rover, who was lying on the mat by the fire, got up to see whatever could be the matter.

"Go away, Rover, just for a minute," said Anne politely; "I'm busy. Oh, Granny, what a lovely surprise!"

"Read your letter aloud, my dear," said the old lady, and of course the little girl did as she was told.

“‘ Dear Anne,’ ” she read; “‘ I am having a little party on Twelfth Night, and I hope you will come. Your loving friend, Joan.’ There,” she finished up; “ and it’s the very first party I’ve ever been asked to. Oh, Granny, may I go?”

“ Certainly, my dear.” Granny looked very pleased. “ So it’s your first party, is it? Have you never been to one in India?”

No, Anne never had; and she had never even heard of Twelfth Night, so Uncle Dick had to explain all about it. “ There’ll be a cake,” he said; “ a lovely frosted one, and inside there will be presents.”

“ Presents! What kind of presents?” Anne clapped her hands. “ Oh, *how* do they get inside?”

“ Why, the fairies put them in, of course.” If Uncle Dick was joking, Anne did not think so, for she believed in fairies, and knew that they were always being kind and lovely.

“ Do you know what the presents will be?” she asked anxiously.

“ Yes, I do, exactly. The fairies have told me.” Uncle Dick looked straight across the table. “ There’ll be a tiny thimble, and a tiny ring; then there’ll be a pea, and a fairy’s stick. And also—listen, Anne!—a bean, perhaps like the

Jack and the Beanstalk bean! If you get *that* you can sow it in the garden!"

"Five fairy-presents!" Anne's face was pink with joy. "Uncle Dick, do you think I'll get one of them?"

"I'm sure you will, if the fairies know their business properly."

"If it's a ring I'll give it to the fairy-prince if he comes," she said; "and if it's the bean I'll keep it for ever and ever." She got no further, for Granny sent her on a message to the kitchen.

"Granny," she said, when the errand was done. "How do the fairies *know* whom to give their presents to?"

"A good and unselfish child always gets a reward," said Granny. Anne decided that she would be as good as gold until the day of the party came, and she was *so* good that Uncle Dick said she would grow into a fairy herself if she didn't take care!

So after that it was rather disappointing to get to the party and find that it was all games, and nothing else at all. That is what Anne thought at first; but just at the end, when Joan and her four little guests were tired of playing, suddenly into the room walked Mr. Gray carrying the Fairy Twelfth-Night Cake!

And such a cake it was! Anne knew that the fairies had made it, and she could hardly breathe while Joan cut it with a knife into slices. Then, when she herself really had a piece on her own plate, she shut her eyes for a moment, and wondered with all her might which of the presents the fairies had chosen for *her*.

“For I *have* been good,” she said; “and there are five of us, so there must be a present each. Oh, I hope it will be the bean, that is what I would like the best of all!”

She began to eat the fairy-cake very slowly, in case she should miss the present. The other children were eating too, and presently there was a shout of delight—Bobby Smith had found the ring!

Then came other little squeals and squeaks: the stick was in Joan’s slice; the thimble in Tommy’s; soon all the fairy-gifts had been found except the bean, and Anne’s face was pink with delight.

So she *was* going to find it! The fairies were going to give it to her! All the others had had a fairy-gift, and she was just lifting her last scrap of cake to her lips when Joan gave a laugh: “Why, I’ve got the bean as well as the stick!”

Anne could hardly believe her ears; she laid down her piece of cake and tried not to cry;

each one of the children had had a present from the fairies and she had not. She had tried so hard to be good and unselfish, and yet the fairies had forgotten her!

With her eyes full of tears she lifted the last scrap of cake from her plate, and then a wonderful thing happened! She bit into something hard, and—it *was* a bean, and, wonder of wonders, a golden bean, all shiny and yellow, the very present that the fairies would give to a little girl whom they loved best of all!

“Oh, *see* what I’ve got!” she cried, holding it up for everyone to look at, while her eyes shone with delight.

Everyone seemed very much surprised; and if Anne hadn’t been too excited she would have noticed that Joan’s father and mother glanced at each other and smiled, for the truth of the matter was that the bean was a gold charm that had fallen from Mrs. Gray’s chain while she was making the cake!

Well, anyhow, *Anne* never knew that. She is still taking care of her fairy-gift; and perhaps the fairies *did* send it, you know, for if they hadn’t one handy at the time, they *might* have arranged for the gold one to fall into the cake, mightn’t they?

Ethel Talbot.

The Fairy Cobbler

There was once on a time a King—I never have heard his name—who had only one little daughter, and she was dreadfully lame. She was ever so charming and pretty, smiling and pink-and-white, with a curly mop of golden hair, and they called her Princess Delight.

Of course, as you may suppose, it troubled the King very much to see his child go limpetty-hop, and always walk with a crutch. But one night he dreamt that a fairy came, who said: “I have got good news. Somewhere about in your kingdom is a pair of enchanted shoes. A little boy will bring them; and your darling Princess Delight must put them on and wear them, and at once she will walk all right.”

So the King awoke from his sleep; and he sent out a proclamation, by heralds and men-at-arms, to tell the whole of the nation: “On my daughter’s thirteenth birthday—that’s Friday, the first of December—I invite all the boys in the land to a party. But they must remember

each to bring a pair of shoes—it doesn't matter a bit the size, or shape, or anything—they do not have to fit. For the Princess wants some magic shoes; and whatever boy shall bring the proper kind shall marry her, and when I'm dead shall be king."

There was such a fuss all over the kingdom, such a fuss and a flurry, such a making of curious shoes, all in a very great hurry. For nobody knew but he might be the fortunate boy to find a pair of beautiful magic shoes, exactly the proper kind.

But one little boy there was, called Piers, and he was as poor as could be. He lived in a wood on berries and nuts, and slept in a hollow tree. He was barefoot himself, and ragged; he never had owned a single penny. But he thought, "I would certainly take some shoes if I could get hold of any". And as he was wandering, thinking this, he heard a curious sound—rappetty-rappetty-tap-tap-tap. And he looked about and around.

And there was a Fairy Cobbler—a little old man in green, a queer little wrinkled fellow, too, as ever yet was seen—working away at fairy shoes, and bootlets tiny and wee, stitch and hammer, rappetty-tap, under a spindlewood tree.

Piers kept his eyes fast fixed on him, for he had heard folks say you must stare at a Fairy Cobbler hard, or else he'll vanish away. He doesn't like to be watched at all while he sits and hammers and stitches, because he believes that people want to know where he hides his riches.

He was cross when Piers first spoke to him—at any rate, he pretended to be as cross as two sticks just then. "So many shoes to be mended, so many shoes to make," said he; "such a lot to do, dear, dear! Why do you interrupt me like this; coming bothering here?" Then Piers explained about the party, and the Princess, and all the rest. "And of all the shoes in the world," said Piers, "I'm certain yours are the best. Will you show me how to make some? I've got no money to pay, but perhaps you'll let me arrange with you some other sort of way?"

"Of all the cool impertinence," said the Cobbler, "ever I heard, you do beat all! Look here, my boy, I'll take you at your word. Bring me the three Magic Acorns that grow in yonder wood, then I'll promise to teach you; and my promise is always good."

"What are the acorns like?" said Piers. But he found it no good to ask. The Cobbler shut his lips up tight, and went on hard at his task.

Well, Piers walked sadly back to the wood, and there, by an alder root, was a very unhappy Piggy, who had got a thorn in his foot. Piers took it out and inquired, "Where do the Magic Acorns grow?" But the Piggy only replied, "Grump! grump!" which meant he didn't know.

Then Piers went on, still sadder; and by and by he found a Squirrel caught by the tail in a trap, which pinned it down to the ground. He set it free, and inquired, "Where do the Magic Acorns grow?" But the Squirrel only replied, "Chut! chut!" which meant he didn't know.

And then a hungry hawk came down with something grey in its beak, something too small to struggle and almost too young to squeak. Piers ran shouting at the hawk, and it dropped its prey and fled. There lay a poor little grey Wood Pigeon, a nestling, nearly dead. He picked it up, and comforted it, and warmed it in his breast, and presently climbed up with it and put it back in its nest. And he said to the mother pigeon, who was fluttering to and fro, exceedingly grateful, "Can you tell where the Magic Acorns grow?" "Coo! coo!" said the pigeon, and immediately up she flew to the very tiptop of her oak tree, and there she repeated, "Coo! coo!" And she brought him down in

her bill the spray where the Magic Acorns grew—a golden-yellow, a silver white, and a copper-red one as well.

Then Piers was very joyful, for he saw at once that these were different from all acorns on any other trees. And back he went to the Cobbler, and though he did not see, three little friends were following him, as close as possible.

The Fairy Cobbler was not there—he had gone away for a minute—and some thieves had found his treasure-crock and all the gold that was in it. For he was very rich indeed, with the money the fairies paid for having their slippers mended and their dear little bootlets made. And he kept it all in an earthen crock under the spindle-tree roots. But two bad men had found it. They had scattered the tools and boots, and were hauling out the treasure. Robbers are full of fears—they kept on starting and listening—and they turned, and there was Piers. They rushed at him to seize him—perhaps they'd have killed him too—and he hit at them with the acorn branch; it was all that he could do. But suddenly, there was the Piggy, and he bit their legs very hard, and the Squirrel was there, and bit their hands, and to throw them off their guard, the Pigeon flapped in their faces. They struggled and yelled, of course.

But now the Fairy Cobbler appeared, and cried all thundery-hoarse: "Begone, you wicked villains! Stay one minute longer," he said, "and I'll turn you both into toadstools!" And they took to their heels and fled.

"Friends," said the Fairy Cobbler, "I must ask you to turn your backs whilst I collect my leather and tools and cobbler's wax." So everyone looked another way, and pretended they didn't know, while the Cobbler put back his treasure-crock, deep in the earth below.

Then Piers uplifted the oaken spray.

"These," said he, "without doubt, are the Magic Acorns you wanted." Alas, they had all dropped out! They were lost in the fight with the robbers. He had nothing left but the bough. "Never mind," said the Cobbler, "I'll help you; you saved my treasure just now. The acorn-cups are left, you see; take those to the Palace. Remember, there isn't a moment to lose—to-day's the first of December. And put the gold and the silver cups on the Princess's feet; but the red—you must bring the Princess right back here, and then put *that* on your head."

So Piers trudged off to the Palace, hungry and footsore, very. He hadn't time to look for a nut, or to find a single berry. The Palace

was such a very grand place, it filled poor Piers with awe. He stood back, shy, in a corner, and wondered at all he saw.

Crowds and crowds of boys were there, the footman hustled them in, and the King on his throne commanded, “Now, let the bringing of shoes begin!” The Princess Delight was as round and sweet and pretty and soft as a peach. She sat in a nice little easy chair and held out her foot to each. But though she laughed and thought it fun, soon she got very tired, for trying on shoes is weary work—and oh, there was such a lot! Wooden sabots, rubber shoes, Turkish slippers as well; snowshoes, moccasins, baby shoes—more than I ever can tell. Every colour and shape and size the different boys who came had brought with them. No good at all; the Princess remained quite lame.

All the boys and all the shoes at last had all been tried. The King was *so* disappointed; but suddenly he cried: “That barefoot boy in the corner—you, sirrah, how dare you stand here in my daughter’s presence and bring no shoes in your hand? Turn him out!” But Piers ran up, and knelt at the Princess’s knee, and held her little feet in his hand—so pretty and soft and wee—and laid on each of those little feet a magical acorn-cup. The Princess trembled

all over; the Princess smiled and stood up. She walked to the throne and curtsied; she twirled to left and right; then she began to dance and dance as brisk as a fairy might.

And she caught fast hold of Piers and made him dance with her too. Away and out of the Palace, like whirling leaves, they flew. And the Princess's nurse ran after, crying "Stop!" as loud as could be. But a Pigeon came and flapped in her face, so that she couldn't see. And a soldier pursued them, shouting; but the Piggy was just close by, and bit the soldier in the legs, and didn't he howl—oh my! And they danced right out to the country, and a gipsy gathering fuel made a snatch at the Princess, because of her diamond jewel. But the Squirrel dropped from a bough and bit him hard in the wrist. Oh, didn't the gipsy jump, and howl, and scowl, and shake his fist!

And they danced right out to Piers's wood, and there, on the side of the hill, was the little green Fairy Cobbler going rappetty-tappetty still.

And then the Princess stopped at last. "The acorn-cup that's red, give me *that*," said the Cobbler. And he put it on Piers's head. And Piers became that moment a beautiful little Prince—the nicest one that ever was seen, either

before or since, all in rose-red velvet, with buttons of rubies and gold, and a little cloak on his shoulder, and a little bright sword to hold. The pretty Princess took his hand and looked at him with joy. "But I liked you just as much," she said, "when you were a barefoot boy!"

The Cobbler patted Piers and Delight. "I'm going to retire," said he; "I'm tired of rappetty-tapping under this spindlewood tree. I'll leave my house to you, though;" and he waved his wrinkled hand, and there was a fairy palace, exceedingly fine and grand. I haven't time to describe it; but it was splendid from floor to rafter. And Piers and the charming Princess lived happy there ever after. As for the Pig, the Squirrel, and Pigeon, they all had done what they could. They did not care for palaces, so they went back home to the wood. You had better look for the Pigeon whenever you've time to spare; for she lives where the Magic Acorns grow, and those are extremely rare. If ever you find them—copper-red, gold-yellow, and silver-white—I hope they'll bring you as much good luck as they did to Piers and Delight.

May Byron.

The Leaf-riders

Eric and Erica had been out in the garden to see the wonderful beauties of the frost on the trees and bushes when the moon was shining on them. They had been so delighted with what they saw that they could hardly go to sleep for talking about it all, and wondering how many fairies it took to do so much beautiful work, for they felt sure that no one but fairies could have done it.

More than once the children had been in the company of fairies. Their mother said it was all fancy; but the visits seemed very real to them, and they were always on the watch to welcome their little friends again. So they were not very much surprised when, just as they were dropping off to sleep, they saw the little shining people come sliding down the moonbeam which shone in at the side of the window-blind and slanted down to the bed in which they lay.

There were hundreds of them, and they were

not the least shy, because they knew the children loved them, and they had played with them before. Every time the fairies came it was easier for the children to become fairies themselves, so that they could join in the games that the little people loved to play. This time they had only to wish that they *were* fairies, and at once they became as small as the others, and a pair of lovely silvery wings grew behind their shoulders, so that they could fly along with their playmates.

Then, after the tiny people had danced round Eric and Erica on the quilt, to show how glad they were to meet them again, they all gathered together and flew in a glittering cloud out of the window, to the wood beyond the garden. They found the trees all glistening and shiny, for the moon was clear, making the frosted leaves and branches sparkle in the light.

For each of their favourite outdoor games the fairies had a song, and the twins joined in this with great delight.

THE LEAF-RIDING SONG

Moonbeam Fairies in the trees
Play together every night;
Winter gale and summer breeze
Give them all the same delight.

Fairy Tales

Frost has made still waters freeze,
Snow has whitened all the land,
And each fay in fancy sees
Joyful sport on every hand.

Faded leaves in red and brown,
Frosted, lose their living grip,
Break lightly off, and flicker down
Amid the branches—tip, tip, tip.

Upon each leaf a fairy rides
And races, waltzing round and round,
As each his leafy air-ship guides
Among the branches, to the ground.

After the fairies had sung these verses, they scattered all over the tree-tops, where withered leaves were still clinging, and each chose the one he thought would make the best aeroplane. Then, at a given signal, each leaf-rider gave his leaf a sudden jerk. This was enough to break them off, and away they all floated in the still air, wavering down and down, sometimes gliding in a big circle, sometimes dipping quickly from side to side, or making a sudden dive so that the fairy rider had great fun trying not to be tumbled out of his air-ship.

At his first trial Eric's leaf sailed away very calmly, and he was just thinking to himself what a fine sport this was, and how easy to learn, when it gave a sudden lurch sideways, and he

caught its upturned edge just in time to save himself from being thrown off.

Then, just as he was recovering from his surprise, his air-ship tipped itself to the other side quite as suddenly, and before Eric could catch hold of anything at all, he found himself falling through the air. However, he had by this time learned so well how to use his wings that he soon recovered himself and overtook his leaf, which had still a long way to go ere it could reach the ground.

Next time he was more careful. He was able to keep his leaf floating down more evenly, although he was still not skilful enough to steer it clear of all the branches. Three times he came bump up against a big branch, and was tumbled right off; and plenty of the other fairies met with the same mishap, so that, had anyone been standing in the wood that night, he would have heard a constant tip, tip, tipping sound, as the leaves came pattering down, lightly touching the branches as they fell.

At first Eric had been so eager to try the leaf-riding that he had not taken time to notice where Erica went. But, after he had learned the game, he thought of her at once, because the twins were very fond of one another, and never liked to be apart for long. However,

there were so many fairies riding on their leafy air-ships, all round about, that Eric found he could not pick out which of them might be Erica. He wondered if she had learned how to ride on a leaf, and he felt very anxious to let her see how clever he was at the game himself.

Choosing a large leaf, he decided to go and look for Erica. His new air-ship had a long stalk, which Eric held in front of him like a mast, while he stood up straight, so that he could see around him on all sides.

Off went Eric's air-ship, sailing smoothly round and round the tree-trunk, while its captain, cleverly balancing himself, watched every other leaf he could see. Suddenly he saw one sailing round his own tree-trunk, just as smoothly as his own air-ship was doing, but in the opposite direction. It was a little lower down and Eric tried to go faster, in order to overtake it.

Suddenly his leaf sailed right into the other one as it came round the tree-trunk, and in a moment their stalks were hooked together, so that the two leaves made one large air-ship. Luckily, neither Eric nor the other fairy fell off, and, as the double air-ship sailed on quite nicely, Eric had time to look at his companion. It was Erica.

In a few minutes all the other leaf-riders



A Fairy Game

were down also, and three cheers were given for Eric and Erica because they had discovered the way to do the twin leaf-riding, and the fairies decided to try it themselves next time they were playing the game.

Then the children thanked their cheery little friends for allowing them to share in such a jolly game. The fairies all flew home with them, and left them warmly tucked into bed, promising, as they flew away, that they would come back some other moonlit night to enjoy the company of their child friends in another game.

James Cowan.

The Silver Latch-key

After breakfast, on Pip's first morning at Payton-on-Sea, his grandfather held up a half-crown and said: "Here's a latch-key to adventure! Now, off with you to the sea and shops."

Pip thanked him and ran out into the sunshine. "I wonder why he called it a latch-key," he thought. "Mother opened our door with a threepenny bit once when the lock went wrong, so p'raps this will fit something."

He missed the turning that led to the sea and suddenly came to a very high wall. It was the highest wall he had ever seen, and it didn't look as though the sea was that way; so he was turning away when, on a level with his nose, he saw a keyhole something like the one at home, only larger. He tried it with the half-crown and the lock opened quite easily. The door flew open; Pip stepped inside, and it banged behind him.

Inside there was a sentry, who cried angrily: "Who goes there?" and barred his way. Pip

knew all about that, so he said, "Friend."

"Advance, friend, and give the countersign," said the soldier ("just what they do in books," thought Pip). He didn't know the countersign, of course, but he advanced, and trod on the soldier's toes, which made him exclaim, "Ouch!"

"I just came in with this; I'm sorry I trod on you, but you said 'advance,'" explained Pip all in a breath.

"Oh, if you have the *latch-key*!" said the soldier. "Go across there."

Pip saw that he was in a large courtyard belonging to a castle toward which the soldier was pointing, so he went across to a cluster of people who were all talking very excitedly near one of the doorways. As soon as they saw him they all ran toward him crying out: "A stranger!" "Let him try!" "Bring him in!" "Take him to the King!" "Don't let him go!" and so forth, till Pip thought he would be deafened. Several of them laid hold of him, and he was pushed and pulled into the doorway. They were not rough, only very excited and noisy. After running him down some passages, and up and down several flights of stairs, they ushered him into a big hall. At one end was a raised platform with a very fine throne

on which was sitting a very worried-looking king. The hall was full of people, and as soon as they saw Pip they too ran at him, and cried out as before: “Let him try!” “Bring him before the King!” and so on, and in less than a minute Pip was face to face with the King.

“Good morning!” said the King. “We are all extremely pleased to see you. It’s very good of you to have come. You shall have your try at once.”

“Try what? I don’t understand,” cried Pip. “What is it all about, Your Majesty?”

“Bless me!” said the King. “Didn’t you come about the dragon?”

“I didn’t come about anything. I just found a door and came in,” explained Pip.

“I thought you had come in answer to the advertisement,” said the King, looking disappointed. “I advertised for a dragon-killer. A dragon has been doing a lot of damage here lately, and now we have enticed him into our storehouse. Anyway, since you are here, you may as well try. Oh, by the way, what reward are we offering?” he added, looking round to the Lord Chamberlain, who stood at his elbow.

The Lord Chamberlain said something in a low voice. “What’s that?” said the King, frowning. “Half the kingdom and a princess!

Oh, nonsense! I can't afford it. We might manage a princess perhaps. Have we any princesses just now?"

The Lord Chamberlain ran his finger down the pages of a large book, murmuring: "M-m, Viola, Rose-in-bloom — M-m, Pansy — M-m, Maybud—Ah, Princess Maybud, your Majesty."

"The very thing," said the King, brightening up. "Look here, young man, slay the dragon for us and we will bestow our cousin Princess Maybud upon you."

"But I *can't* kill dragons," cried Pip desperately. "I don't know anything about them—and I don't want to be married to anybody." But he might as well have held his tongue, for he was seized by many hands, and in a few moments was pushed up some steps to a door marked "STOREHOUSE". The door was opened, he was pushed inside, and it was slammed behind him. He found himself on a narrow platform, which ran round the store-room for convenience in reaching the shelves. The dragon was a very large one, and occupied almost the entire floor below him. It looked up as Pip came in. "So you're the latest, are you?" it said. "As soon as I've finished these bananas, I'll see what you taste like."

"Look here," cried Pip, "I taste horrid. I

don't want to do you any harm. They pushed me in here; I couldn't help it."

"Everything tastes good to me," replied the dragon. "I'm not a bit particular. I tell you what I *will* do, though. I'll leave you till the last if you like. Throw me down those jars of pickled cabbage behind you, will you?" Pip threw him everything he could reach, and walked along the platform toward the end where the dragon's tail was. On the shelves were some large boxes marked "COOKING SALT".

"Why, of course," said Pip, "the very thing." He remembered being told that you could catch birds by putting salt on their tails, and if birds, why not dragons? He took two handfuls and threw them on to the dragon's tail.

The tail lashed out and swept a row of Christmas puddings off a shelf below him. He rained down more salt. Smash went some cases of jam and dried figs.

"They won't have any groceries for months," thought Pip, pouring down salt as fast as he could snatch it from the box. At last it was over; the dragon lay quite dead, amid the ruins of the royal groceries. Pip opened the door and cried to the people in the courtyard: "The dragon is dead!" He liked that bit awfully. There was tremendous cheering, and

Pip was carried shoulder-high into the hall again.

“Splendid!” cried the King, patting him on the back. “We are much obliged. We have commanded the reward to come at once.” Then, turning to the Lord Chamberlain, he said, “Where is the reward?”

“She comes!” cried the Lord Chamberlain, and Pip saw a very ill-tempered-looking princess advancing with outstretched arms.

“Here is our little Maybud,” said the King. “May you both be very happy!”

“I won’t be married to her,” cried Pip. “I’m only a little boy.”

“Nonsense!” exclaimed the King. “She is your reward. Take her; she is yours.” And he waved his sceptre and smiled kindly but firmly.

Pip saw Princess Maybud bearing down upon him with a terrible smile, and looked desperately round for escape. At one end of the platform was an open window; before he could be stopped, he made a wild leap for this, and scrambled down a water-pipe into the courtyard. “Stop him!” “Catch him!” cried the King, the princess, and the courtiers, leaning out of all the windows; but Pip was through the crowd and making for the gate. It’s all very well to be a dragon-slayer, but when one has been a real hero he expects to be allowed

to speak for himself. And that's just what the King wouldn't allow Pip to do. Besides, he was rather afraid of the Princess Maybud. So he ran as hard as ever he could. There was a general rush for him, but he was well ahead. "I have the silver latch-key," he cried, holding up the half-crown to the sentry. The man stepped back, Pip fitted the coin into the lock, the door swung open, and he was through it in a twinkling. It clanged behind him, just as the crowd reached it.

"It's no use," he heard the sentry say; "you can't get through, not if it was ever so."

Pip ran down the road as fast as he could. He took the right turning this time.

"Anyway," he panted as he ran, "I've still got the half-crown," and he made for the shops and the sea.

M. Lavars Harry.



Needles and Pins

“ Dear! dear!” said Nurse; “ I’ve lost that needle again.” She put down her work and began to search on the hearth-rug.

But Bernard, who was curled up on the window-seat, pretended not to hear; he was busy looking at his new nursery-rhyme book, and didn’t want to be disturbed. “ I must just finish looking at this picture of Boy Blue,” he said to himself; “ and, if she hasn’t found it by then, perhaps I’ll go and help.”

“ Needles and Pins! Needles and Pins!” said a voice very suddenly in his ear. The little boy looked up in surprise, for the voice was not Nurse’s, but quite a different one. “ Needles and Pins,” it went on; “ when a boy’s lazy, his trouble begins!”

“ But—but—who are you?” asked Bernard. “ And wherever am I?” he went on, feeling rather frightened, because everything seemed changed. Nurse was gone, and so was the nursery; instead, he was in a kind of farm-yard. A farm-yard, too, that he seemed to

remember quite well. Why, why, it was the very one in the Boy-Blue picture that he had just been looking at. "How funny!" he said.

"Funny, is it?" said the voice again, and there was Boy Blue himself, close behind him, yawning and looking very sleepy indeed. "Do you know that you've come to Lazy Land?" he said.

"Lazy Land?" said Bernard; somehow he didn't like the sound at all.

"That's where they send lazy people, you know," said Boy Blue. "Great fun, it is! You and I shall get on well here, for we can sleep all day. I was too lazy to drive my sheep out of the corn"—he gave a big yawn—"and you were too lazy to find Nurse's needle"—he gave another yawn—"so we're best here. Let's go to sleep together under the hay-cock."

"But I don't want to," said Bernard; "it isn't bed-time; it's only time for tea."

"Tea-time?" said Boy Blue sleepily. "You won't get tea here; nor dinner, either. Nothing but sleep, nice sleep! Just the place for lazy folks," he said, and shut his eyes.

"But I want to get back," said Bernard. "I never knew—I'd rather go back and help Nurse."

"Well, if you really want to," yawned Boy Blue, sitting up for a minute, "you'd better go



Boy Blue yawns

and try to find a piece of straw in that stack of needles and pins over there. That's the only way!" He fell asleep again.

"All right," said Bernard. "I suppose you mean that I'm to find a needle in a hay-stack? You're saying it all wrong, you know!"

"Oh, *am* I?" yawned Boy Blue, waking up again for a minute. "There's the stack!" He pointed with a lazy finger and shut his eyes again, as Bernard took a step towards the place and began his search.

"Oh! oh! oh!" he shouted. And really there was no wonder. He drew out his hands, and they were all scratched and aching. His knees, where he had been kneeling close to the needle-stack, were all scratched too, for the stack *was*

made of needles and pins, just as Boy Blue had said. There was no hay there at all, and only one little piece of straw that was hidden away somewhere for Bernard to find, if he was ever to get away from Lazy Land.

“Oh, what a dreadful place this is!” he thought. “Oh, I wish I’d never come here! I wish I’d never been lazy. I will get back again, I will. I’ll search and search for that piece of straw till I find it.” He tried to pick up the needles one by one as he spoke, but it was no good; they stuck into him everywhere.

“Wake up, Master Bernard!” said Nurse, and suddenly—there was the hearth-rug, and the nursery, and everything just the same as it had been before. “Why, you’ve been to sleep while I’ve been looking for this lost needle! What are you calling out about?”

“Why, Nurse, I must have been dreaming,” began Bernard; then he stopped. “But it *couldn’t* have been a dream,” he said, “for my hands and feet are still tingling all over.”

“You’ve got pins and needles, *that’s* what it is!” said Nurse; “with sitting still so long!”

“*Pins and Needles!* Of course,” said Bernard. Then he jumped down and went at once to help, for he didn’t want to find himself in Lazy Land again!

Ethel Talbot.

Peggy and the Ink-pot Pixie

It really was a most disagreeable morning: nothing seemed to go right. To begin with, it was raining, and Peggy had been promised a drive, "if it was fine". Then, when lesson-time came, she could not do her sums, and the letters in her copy-book refused to keep between the lines and would get wobbly; and, to make matters worse, Aunt Miranda was cross—not just pretending, but really cross—and declared that the last page had been written so badly that it would have to be done all over again.

"I wish," said Peggy at last, with a great sigh, "that the fairy people would come and help me with my copy, or else the pixies would——"

"Nonsense, child!" said Aunt Miranda. "Come, I will set you a fresh copy, and it must be done in a quarter of an hour. Now, set to work like a good girl, and let me hear no more foolishness about pixies and fairies!" And the next minute she was gone, closing

the door behind her with quite an angry snap.

Peggy laid her pen crossways upon the ink-pot, folded her arms on the table, placed her chin on her arms, and sighed again.

“It would have been all right if Mummy had been at home,” she said aloud. “She’d have understood, of course. I’m afraid Aunt Miranda is one of the people who don’t understand.”

“Exactly!” said a very loud voice—so loud and so near her that Peggy jumped.

“Oh, I beg your pardon!” she said politely, though she couldn’t see anyone at all.

“I hope you do,” said the voice rather crossly; “you nearly jogged me off this penholder, and it’s not a very safe seat even when you don’t jog.”

“Oh-h!” cried Peggy again; but this time she was staring at the ink-pot, for seated on the pen she had laid across the top of it was the very tiniest man she had ever seen—he really was no taller than a pin! He was dressed in black, and he sat on the penholder, nursing one leg and swinging the other over the ink. And all the while he looked at Peggy and laughed.

“As you were saying,” he said, “Aunt Miranda is certainly one of the people who

don't understand. There aren't many people who do."

"My mother does," put in Peggy hastily.

"Of course," said the little man airily; "all mothers do. But you'd be surprised to know the number of stupid people who don't believe in fairies, and therefore don't understand anything about them."

"Then," cried Peggy, clapping her hands, "you are a fairy! I thought you were!"

"Well—a pixie," said the tiny black man. "It really comes to the same thing. The Ink-pot Pixie, at your service." He skipped down from the penholder and stood in front of her.

"If that copy has to be done in a quarter of an hour, you'd better hurry," he remarked. "Here, get your pen—that's it. Now, I'll sit at the top end, you see, to guide it, and you hold it just as usual—there."

And presently Peggy felt her pen begin to glide along quite smoothly, whilst all the letters came out rounded and beautiful, and just in the places they ought to be in.

"Ink-pots and pens are a great nuisance," went on the Pixie; he was sitting astride on Peggy's penholder, guiding it very fast. "I've charge of all the ink-pots in the kingdom, so

I ought to know. And the people who use them are so stupid, too, sometimes. They never think of filling them till I remind them. Then they say the ink is too thick, or too thin, and I get the blame. So I put little hairs and bits of blotting-paper at the ends of their pen-nibs, to punish them—he-he!"

"Do you look after all the ink-pots—the red ones too?" asked Peggy.

"Well, no," replied the little man; "my brother, Pixie Red-ink, looks after them, but I've more work to do than he has. There, your copy's finished, and the quarter of an hour's up. Some day I'll let you see—good gracious, here's your aunt!"

And before Peggy could thank him, or even look up, he had jumped off the pen and was gone. Aunt Miranda stood in the doorway. She had her hat on, and was smiling, and all her crossness seemed to have gone.

"Well, is it finished?" she asked, coming to look over Peggy's shoulder. "The rain has stopped, and I'm going for a drive, and I don't want to leave a little idle girl at home. Why, Peggy,, that's splendid! I knew you could do it if you tried, dear!"

"Oh, Auntie!" cried Peggy, giving her a great hug, "it was the Ink-pot Pixie who

helped me to write the copy. He's the queerest little man, and——”

“ What rubbish is the child talking now?” said Aunt Miranda. “ More nonsense about pixies and fairies? Run away, and ask Nurse to dress you!”

“ After all, it was the Ink-pot Pixie,” thought Peggy, as she closed the door.

So Peggy got her drive after all. She didn't speak much while she was out, but you may be sure that she thought a great deal about her new friend the Ink-pot Pixie, and how lucky she had been to meet so useful a person. And she thought about Aunt Miranda, too.

It really *was* a pity that Aunt Miranda was one of the people who didn't understand!

Dorothy King.



Prince Charming

Whenever Prince Charming stood by the sea-shore, he was certain he heard a sweet voice sadly singing:

“ Time flies fast;
 ’T will be too late,
 And helpless I!
 Oh, cruel fate!”

At last the Prince could bear it no longer, and rushed away to consult the old wizard, Greybeard.

“ Oh yes!” grunted Greybeard. “ I know all about her. She is imprisoned for refusing to marry the Sea-King, and if not rescued to-day it will be too late!”

“ Then give me a charm which will enable me to stay under water till I rescue her,” urged the Prince.

“ Umph!” said Greybeard. “ Will you give me the oak chest that the Princess has with her? It’s full of gold!”

“ Of course I will.”

“ Suppose she won’t let you give it?” suggested Greybeard, beginning to mix a charm in a crystal glass.

“ She will—I am sure she will. She would rather be free, with no gold, than married to the Sea-King if she does not like him. Be quick, be quick!”

The old man mixed the draught eagerly enough now, and the Prince hastily swallowed the charm and was off to his sailing vessel. Quickly his men let him down over the side of the ship, securely swinging from iron chains. There was no sweet singing to guide him.

“ Surely I am not too late,” muttered the Prince, as his feet touched the firm sand. Just then he noticed two little fishes swimming in front of him, and he followed them for want of a better guide. Sure enough, they swam straight on to where a pretty maiden sat weeping by the side of a brown oak chest.

“ No dainties to-day, little fish,” she said sadly, showing her empty hands. “ All the magic food is gone!”

“ Don’t cry,” said Prince Charming gently. “ Hasten with me; let us get away quickly.”

Princess Crystal sprang to her feet.

“ Yes, yes! hasten—the Sea-King may come any minute to claim me!” and she helped the

Prince to fasten the chains securely round herself and the oaken chest.

Then the Prince gave the signal, and his men pulled them all up. Crystal clapped her hands joyfully, as she drew in a long breath of fresh air.

“Here comes old Greybeard for the treasure chest!” laughed the men.

“He is welcome to it,” said the grateful Princess, “if he helped to free me.”

“He did,” the Prince told her, “and I promised him the oak chest as a reward.”

“Then come and take it,” said Princess Crystal to Greybeard, who tugged it away with him, grunting with delight.

That same night a great storm arose, and huge waves raced inland, and seemed as if they would beat the castle to pieces. At last came one so high that it seemed to tower over the building, and on its crest rode the angry Sea-King.

But his fury was all to no purpose; the rescue had been made within the stated time, and even he could not undo a charm when once it had been uttered.

“Be as angry as you like,” the Prince cried gaily and loudly; “I have won my bride, and I mean to keep her.”

Helen Broadbent.

The Blue-eyed Princess

There was once a princess who was so beautiful that she made everything else look dusty. The King, the Lord Chancellor, and the Five Members of Parliament always kept a duster in their breast-pockets and dusted themselves whenever she passed by. Thus was the castle called "The Castle of the Seven Dusters".

The King was a regal old soul, who wore his crown and dressed in red plush and ermine even on week days. His only weakness was a dragon, which he kept in a rusty cage at the bottom of the garden. He dearly loved his daughter; but then, everybody loved the Princess, except Sam the gardener, who could not work when she was near; for, whenever he saw her beautiful eyes, he wept with anger because he could not grow lobelias as blue as they.

Many princes wished to marry her, so the King invited them all to spend the week-end. There were fifty of them—and they were all handsome and courtly except one, who was fat

and fair, and was never heard to say anything except: "Er—'" His mother, who came to look after him, explained that he was rather shy but very steady.

Now the Princess could not make up her mind which of the dashing princes she liked best, so they went on staying week-ends at the Castle of the Seven Dusters until the King told her she must hurry up, as he could not afford it any longer. But, although she thought about it a great deal, she could not make up her mind, and became quite worried. So, early one morning, she stole into the woods where they kept the witch.

"A—ah!" said the witch, looking at her tongue, "it is red--red is the colour of love--you are in love, Princess!"

The Princess was much impressed by this logic, and poured forth all her woes.

"My father is entertaining fifty princes up at the castle, forty-nine of whom I love; but the fiftieth is a stupid owl! Tell me, how shall I discover which of these young men loves me most truly?"

The witch—a wicked woman, who practised Black Magic on a large scale—smiled a crusty sort of smile at this, for she suddenly remembered her son, Sam the gardener.

“ Fair Princess,” croaked she, “ I will steal the colour from those beautiful eyes of yours with my most potent spell. The prince who continues to love a white-eyed princess must have a very deep love indeed! Thus will you discover him who loves you best.”

So saying, the crafty creature waved her hands over the girl’s eyes, and immediately all the glorious blue faded from them.

“ Come back when you have found your true love and I will make them as blue as ever,” said she, and no sooner had the Princess left the damp hut than she scuttled over to her cupboard, and, taking out a little red book, made off as fast as she could hop to the lodge where Sam the gardener lived.

Sam was a dusty little fellow, who thought of nothing except weed-killer and bulbs; but he was quite harmless, though a very uneducated person, and really disliked nothing but weeds and the Princess’s blue eyes.

“ Sam,” said his mother, “ I will make you a king yet! Listen! The Princess Gleam cannot make up her mind which prince she will marry, so I have given her a charm which will speedily scare those princes away. This is your chance, my son. I have,” here she produced a book which was called *How to become a*

Gentleman—“I have here a book which will help you to polish up your manners. Then, a few smart clothes, and you will be as princely as any, and can march into the castle and win the Princess!”

Sam the gardener scowled, and said he would not go near the Princess’s eyes; but when his mother explained that she had removed their irritating colour, he smiled, and said it was a good idea. So he sat up all night reading *How to become a Gentleman*, while his aged mother sewed away at a new suit for him.

Meanwhile things were not going well up at the castle. When the princes saw that the Princess’s beautiful eyes were no longer blue, they one and all coughed and said they must be going, as their kingdoms were getting into a muddle without them. But Prince Dickon—he who was fat and fair—only murmured huskily, “Er—”, and continued to stay. The Princess sat and wept all day, and the King, the Lord Chancellor, and the Five Members of Parliament all said it was a shame. But presently in rushed the Lord Chancellor with news that another prince had just arrived.

“Give him the blue bedroom,” said the King, cheering up, and Sam the gardener, in disguise, was entertained with great pomp and splendour.

Sam liked the pomp and splendour, but he was worried by his false moustache, which jerked up and down. Then he never could think of any conversation except seeds, weed-killer, and lobelias; and he always forgot to avoid eating green peas with his knife. However, he gave it out that he was fond of the simple life and was interested in botany, so the Princess liked his seedy conversation quite well, and did not mind when he tucked a napkin round him at meals.

“That is the simple life, Papa,” she explained, when the King, who was keen on etiquette, lifted his eyebrows. She would have probably ended by marrying the little rogue if the dragon had not interfered. This is how he did it.

One day everybody was sitting eating cauliflower and white sauce in the banquet-hall, when the King’s crown slipped over his right ear in his surprise. He pointed to his daughter’s eyes, and behold, they were once more becoming blue. Sam turned very pale, for he again began to think what a pity it was that he could not grow lobelias as blue as they were. Here there came a terrible noise, and the Five Members of Parliament rushed in, screaming with terror.

“Your Majesty’s dragon has burst his rusty cage and torn up all the lawn!” cried they.

Sam the gardener moaned.

“—He then ate the witch—”

“That’s why my eyes—!” cried the Princess. “He must have eaten the charm too!”

“—And he is now coming upstairs to gobble the Princess!” shrieked the Five Members, as they hid under the throne.

What a scene! Everybody crawled beneath the table, including Sam, and when the poor Princess, whose dress had become caught in the throne, begged him to save her, he only crawled farther under. With an awful roar the dragon leapt in, belching smoke, flames, and cinders from his nostrils. He made for the Princess Gleam with gaping jaws, but Prince Dickon rushed to the rescue with the carving-knife, and cut off his head at a single blow.

The King was very angry when he discovered who Sam really was, and would have had him executed on the spot; but Prince Dickon begged him not to do so.

So the King pardoned him, and he retired from public life, lived in his mother’s damp hut, grew lobelias to his heart’s content, and ate green peas off his knife every day.

Of course, the Prince and Princess were married, and everybody united in living happily ever afterwards.

A. M. Angus.

The Youngest Councillor

I

What is a Councillor? A Councillor, my dear, is a wise man belonging to a Council, and the business of a Council is to give some people orders, and other people advice, and to tell them when they've made a mistake. Kings have Councillors. Not that it's always wise to tell a king when he's wrong, but there are Councillors who can do even that with practice.

Which reminds me of Bunkin. He was one of the Little People who live among the bracken on the mountain-side, and the oak fern in the woods. These Little People are seldom seen. Some of them are young, and some of them are old, but none of them ever grow any older. Bunkin was neither very young nor very old.

One afternoon, when the flies were buzzing, the King called all the Little People together to tell them the Laws. He did this very often, as the Little People are forgetful, and he had two Councillors called Ramkin and Bundlepoop,

who stood close behind him in case he forgot any Laws. Sometimes they gave a little cough, which is one way of letting a king know when he is wrong.

Well, the King had just got to the Law about Fidgeting, when a jackdaw swooped down out of the sky, snatched the jewelled crown off his head, and flew away with it.

It was all very exciting. The Councillors stuffed their beards into their mouths to keep from coughing too much, and all the Little People disappeared into the bracken—all, that is to say, except Bunkin, who stood looking at the King, who was staring after the jackdaw, which was flying away with the glittering crown in its beak. And as Bunkin had no beard to stuff into his mouth, and had lost his handkerchief, he laughed.

And the King heard him.

The King was very angry. He made a Law there and then that no one was to laugh any more until the crown was found. And he made another Law that whoever should find it would be made a Councillor.

And then he looked very hard at Bunkin, and told him that if he laughed again he would be put in the hollow tree where the Downy Bird lived.

II

Bunkin had never seen the Downy Bird. He did not want to see it. Sitting down near a stone wall with grey moss on it, he began to think; but there was an ants' nest there, so he went somewhere else.

A hedgehog came out of some brambles and spoke to him. The hedgehog knew the Downy Bird, and told Bunkin it was a terrible fowl, that turned its head right round and looked at you with eyes like hot pennies. But it was friendly to Councillors.

On hearing this, Bunkin wished he were a Councillor, but the hedgehog thought he would rather be a horse. Sometimes he played at being a horse—a tame horse, because he pricked himself when he tried to kick. The hedgehog snorted and pranced to show how he played at being a horse, and Bunkin tried to ride on his back. Just the silly sort of thing Bunkin would do. You must know a lot before you know enough to be a Councillor. For one thing, you must know all the things you must not do.

When Bunkin went away, the hedgehog was pretending to be a pincushion.

A butterfly which Bunkin saw could talk of

nothing but her beautiful wings, and a weasel was anything but friendly.

Then Bunkin met a squirrel near a beech tree, and he tried to play at horses with the squirrel. Now of all animals squirrels are by far the rudest, and this one was so angry that he kept looking over his shoulder and chattering at the pitch of his voice as he ran up the beech tree, so that he did not notice he had come to the top until he shot right into the air. As he fell down, a hawk saw him and pounced, and Bunkin dragged him under a bush just in time.

The squirrel was very grateful, and Bunkin said: "You see what comes of being rude. Do you know where the King's crown is?"

The squirrel did not, but he said he would go and see. Bunkin waited for him, and when he came back he said he had looked everywhere but could not find it, and the Downy Bird had nearly caught him.

"Perhaps it's *under* the ground," he said. "Better ask the rabbits."

So Bunkin went away and found a poor little bunny with its foot caught in a wire snare. A lot of other bunnies, and a partridge or two, and a pheasant, were sitting about telling him stories to pass the time.

They were all very grateful when Bunkin undid the wire, and Bunkin sent them off to look for the crown; but it was getting late, and they were afraid of the Downy Bird. Only one little bunny rabbit came back, and he said the crown must be in the water because it was not under the ground, and, as the bunny did not object to playing horse, he took Bunkin on his back and ran down to the water where the Vole lived.

The Vole was at home, but he told Bunkin that if the crown had been in the water he would certainly have heard about it. Then he wagged his nose.

A vole can be very funny when he likes, and this one made Bunkin laugh. Ramkin and Bundlepoop happened to be passing at the moment, and—they heard him laugh!

III

Bunkin went down on his knees to Ramkin and Bundlepoop, but they would not listen. They clutched Bunkin, and carried him through the forest kicking and screaming that the Downy Bird would get him, and brought him at length to a large hollow tree covered with moss and mistletoe. They pushed him through a black

hole into the tree, and Ramkin sat outside while Bundlepoop went off to tell the King.

It was very dark inside, and Bunkin was very frightened. He sat on the ground watching a bright hole near the top. He could see a little bit of sky and some leaves, and now and again a bird with a black head looked in through the hole. Its eyes were small and bright—not in the least like hot pennies.

Presently the bird put its head on one side and asked: "What are you doing there?"

Bunkin said he was waiting for the Downy Bird.

"Well," said the black bird, "I wouldn't!"

Then the bird went away, and Bunkin wondered if it had gone to tell the Downy Bird.

And suddenly Bunkin began to laugh, and laugh, and laugh! Ramkin put his head in and told him not to make such a noise. "Because," he said, "the King's coming. Here he is."

A moment later the King put in his head and asked Bunkin if he couldn't behave himself. Bunkin was laughing so joyously that he could not speak, but he pointed up at a jackdaw's nest inside the hollow tree. The King thought Bunkin was laughing at him again, so he pushed his way in and boxed Bunkin's ears. But when he saw the nest and looked into it—well, what

do you think he found? Quite right. The crown was there! And the King made Bunkin a Councillor on the spot!

The funny thing is that a big horned owl with eyes like hot pennies had been blinking at them all the time from the darkest corner of that hollow tree. But he was friendly to Councillors.

J. D. Westwood.



Bunkin and a friend

The Letter that Flew Away

There was once a little girl named Ann; she was not quite big enough to go to school, but next week she was going to be seven years old, and after that she was to begin lessons. Her birthday was coming on Saturday, and her mother had promised to write and ask some little friends to come to tea with her.

Ann was a very good person for giving parties, she knew such heaps of games; not silly little games that you would rather not let your big sisters see you playing, but real proper ones that everybody likes, and which boys will play without looking at each other and laughing, and that is saying a good deal. She always had a Summer party in the garden, a Christmas party when the girls and boys arrived with dancing-shoe bags hanging on their arms, and a birthday party on the 28th of March. It was this party that was to be next Saturday.

Ann's mother had written four letters the day before yesterday, but the answers had

come that very morning to say that the March wind had given all her little friends such colds that their mummies feared they must not come out on Saturday.

This was very disappointing; but there was one more letter to write to a large family called the Thompsons, and if they could come it would be all right, because, as there were seven of them, they made a party all by themselves.

Ann's mother sat down and wrote:

“ DEAR LITTLE PEOPLE,

“ Will you all come to tea with Ann on Saturday next? We shall look for you early in the afternoon.

“ Yours affectionately,

“ ANN'S MUMMY.”

Ann pulled on her goloshes, and ran up the road to the post-box with the letter. There was a great wind blowing that rushed off with old gentlemen's hats and turned ladies' umbrellas inside out, and then laughed and hurried the little girls to school as if to say: “ Come along now, I'll give you a push,” and then blew their hair into their eyes so that they could not see

where they were going, and then laughed again; and when Ann got to the corner of the road it snatched her letter out of her hand and blew it away. Ann gave a scream and ran after it across a field, and then across another field. Sometimes it would stop and almost let her pick it up, and just as she clutched at it on it went again, turning over and over, and at last it flew away altogether, and Ann stopped running and said, "It's no use," and turned sadly home again.

Of course her mother soon wrote another letter to the Thompsons. But Ann was certainly not lucky about this party: the Thompsons all had colds too, and none of them could come.

"I'm afraid I shall be the only one at your party, Ann," said her mummy, and Ann gave her a hug and said: "I'd rather have you than anybody." Only you can't play "Hunt the slipper" with two, or eat a whole birthday cake, and Ann could not help feeling very disappointed indeed.

"Wretched old March wind!" she murmured. "He's spoilt my party."

Now old Mr. March wind had not really meant to be unkind; he is always half in fun, only he is somehow the only person who sees the joke; and now that he had made all the

children stay away from the party, he suddenly resolved to make a jolly ending to it after all. So he blew and blew the lost letter over many fields. Sometimes it stuck in a hedge or pressed itself up against a tree, then on it would go again, over and over, and once it flew right over a telegraph wire and heard the flying feet of the telegrams on their way.

But at last it stopped in a wood where goblins live, just outside their little house.

There was an old Goblin sitting in the front window, and when he saw the letter he hobbled out and picked it up. He turned it over three times, and then put it down again and hurried in to call the others. Very quickly they all came hurrying out; some hopped, some skipped, some danced, and they had the queerest faces you ever saw, and red jackets. First they all had a good look at the envelope; but it had been in a puddle, and so they couldn't see whom it was for, because the writing was blotted out; but the stamp was quite clean, and the first Goblin said very solemnly:

“That is a picture of the King; this letter must be from His Majesty to us.” There was a silence after he had said this, then some of the goblins giggled nervously, and some looked a little scared. Then, as there seemed nothing



His Majesty's Letters

else to do, they laid it down on the grass again and danced round it hand-in-hand in a ring, pointing their curious long toes at the stamp, but being very careful not to tread on it. Then they picked it up and opened it, and the old Goblin put on his spectacles and read aloud:

“ DEAR LITTLE PEOPLE,

“ Will you all come to tea with Ann on Saturday next? We shall look for you early in the afternoon.

“ Yours affectionately,

“ ANN’S MUMMY.”

When he had finished he noticed that all the goblins had blushed with pleasure, and they all began capering about and calling out:

“ Ho! Ho! Ho! Ho!
We ’ll go—we ’ll go!”

And the old Goblin said in a whisper to his son: “ Depend upon it, it’s Ann’s birthday!”

Ann had put on her party dress, although nobody could come, for she did not see why *all* the fun need be spoilt, and dressing for a party is one of the jolliest things about it. So

she came into the nursery looking her very best, and sat down tidily to wait for her mummy, who was also dressing up. Yes! it *would* have been nice to have had a real party, and Ann gave a tiny little sigh which nobody could have heard. Just at that minute there began to be strange noises in the street downstairs. Ann got up and went to the window. Someone was driving up to the door! But, good gracious! what strange carriages! and what a lot of them! They all stopped. One was a sort of shell drawn by two birds, the next was a large birds' nest with a shade, drawn by a little furry animal. Next came a market-basket on wheels with a real coachman driving, and two mice standing up behind; and really there were so many, and it looked so grand, that Ann quickly ran back to her seat by the fire, and then her mummy came in.

Ann did not say a word; she had guessed that something queer was going to happen, and the next minute the door opened and in came seventeen goblins! They were all dressed and trimmed up in their very best clothes, and their faces were so excited that there was no doubt they had come to a party, and were ready for games or dancing or anything. They all bowed low to Ann's mummy, and then they sat down

on the floor, while two coachmen brought in a hamper which they put down in the ring, and then they set to work to unpack it. Then, as each Goblin gave Ann his present he went down on one knee and said: "Many happy returns of the Day!" Ann looked at her mummy, and her mummy looked at her; but they were too good at giving parties to seem at all surprised, and so Ann's mummy only said: "We are delighted to see you, dear little fairy men; and now, what game shall we play?"

First came "Hunt the Slipper", only the slipper jumped round the ring all by itself, and dodged and danced amid great shrieks and laughter from the party. Then came "Musical chairs", only the chairs began to follow each other round the room too, and when the music stopped everybody sat down plump on the floor, because it was so difficult to catch the chairs.

Then came tea-time, and Ann cut the birthday cake, and the Goblins ate it nearly all up. After tea the strange little people did wonderful tricks, hopping over each other's heads, leaping up to the ceiling and knocking their noses, and then they called the mice and made them sing songs, while Ann and her mummy sat together and clapped.

When they had finished their antics the old Goblin said:

“ I think it is time to go home now. I am not as young as I was, and the March wind teases my throat.”

“ Naughty old March wind!” said Ann; “ he always does things like that.”

“ Never mind,” said the Goblin cheerfully “ He brought us the letter from you. Here it is. So he is not such a bad old fellow after all.”

And he showed Ann and her mummy the letter that had flown away.

“ Did the wind take it to you ? ” asked Ann. The old Goblin nodded.

“ Yes, thank you,” he said, “ and we are going to have the picture of the King framed.”

Then they all said “ good-bye ”, and drove away in their carriages, while Ann undid her seventeen parcels.

Natalie Joan

A Tale about a Sixpence

Old John was an old tinker who used to go about the countryside selling kettles and cans, and nice new pans. And one day, as he was going over the moor with his old nag and cart, he saw an old woman trying to kindle a fire. Old John just *had* to look at her, for she wore a green gown and a red shawl and a gipsy bonnet, and quite a nice picture she made.

Just as Old John came along, the fire burnt up in the liveliest way, and the twigs went crackle-crackle. Then the old dame brought from a basket three beautiful brown eggs; and then she looked about, and looked about, and looked about. Then she looked up and saw Old John and his cart, and she called: "Hi, old man, stop a minute!"

Old John stopped at once and asked what was the matter.

"Dear, dear," said she, "a dreadful business, for I have lost the little pan in which I boil

my eggs. I fear I must have dropped it miles away."

Old John looked here and there, but he could see nothing of a little pan. Then he said: "Well, dame, the matter is easily remedied, for I have pans in plenty." And he got down and looked in his cart, and after a bit he found a little pan somewhere about the right size.

Then he said to the old dame: "You can have this pan for sixpence." And that was a decent offer, for the price was much more, and Old John was a poor man.

"Thank you, neighbour, I will have it," said the old woman. She took the pan and set the three eggs in it; and you would have said it had been made to hold them. Then she brought out her purse and looked in it, then she felt in her long deep pocket, then she pushed a finger into the heel of her shoe.

And when she had done all that, she shook her head and said: "Alas, old man, I have not sixpence!" And when she had thought for a minute or so, she said: "I will give you, instead, two of my brown eggs."

"Nay," said Old John, "that will leave you but one; and I have no wish to take eggs with me on my journey. You must give me the money when I pass another time."

“Aye, that I will,” said she, and she thanked Old John again.

Then the old man went on his way with his pots and pans.

The next time he crossed the moor, he thought he might see the old woman, for he supposed she was one of the cottagers who lived in the houses here and there on the moor; but not a sign of her was to be seen.

Even when he gave his cry, she did not come out; and it was shrill enough and went like this:

“Pots and pans,
And watering-cans,
One broad basin with a lip;
Come and see them, yip, yip, yi-p!”

But no old woman came out, wearing a green gown and a red shawl and a gipsy bonnet, to pay her debt of sixpence; and, when Old John had passed over the moor quite a number of times without seeing her, he came to the conclusion that the old dame did not mean to pay her debt, and that he would never see her again.

So time passed, and things went badly with Old John. For one thing, both he and his nag grew too old to go travelling round the country selling pots and pans, and people would not

come to his cottage to buy. Then the old man was ill once or twice, and that pulled his business down.

So at last he was in a very bad way indeed; and one morning, as he set out for town to buy bread and meal, he had only a few coppers in his pocket.

Just because the sun was shining, Old John thought he would go to town by way of the moor, and he was just about half-way across when he heard a voice crying: "Hi, old man, stop a minute!"

"Dear me, there seems something familiar about that," said Old John to himself, and he stopped at once and looked about.

You may imagine his surprise when he saw, in exactly the same spot, the same old woman who had got that saucepan from him. Not only that, but she was wearing the same green gown and the same red shawl, and on her head a gipsy bonnet.

She spoke to Old John just as if she had seen him a day or two ago, instead of a year or two ago. "Here, neighbour," said she, "is the sixpence I owe you." And with that she pressed a sixpence into the old man's hand and vanished away.

Old John looked this way and that way,

across the moor, but not a sign of the old woman was to be seen.

“ Well, now, this is a queer happening,” said he.

Then he looked at the sixpence in his hand, and he saw that it was bright and new, and that it had a hole in it. In fact, he had never in all his life seen a sixpence as bright as that one, and he thought it was a great pity that he must give it away.

However, when he reached town he had to part with it, for he needed more food than his coppers would buy; so he gave it to the baker’s wife in payment for a loaf and some meal.

And with the coppers he bought one or two other things.

When he reached home that evening, he saw to his old nag, and then he sat by the fire and made for himself a little plate of porridge.

He was just eating this, when there came to the door a rap-rap-rap.

So Old John set down his plate and went to see who was waiting there.

And who should it be but the baker’s wife: “ See, Old John,” said she, “ here is your sixpence. It has told me a tale of the days when I was young, and the price it asked for the telling was that I should give it back to you. So here

it is, for the tale was well worth the price." And with that she pressed the sixpence into the old man's hand, and hurried away.

Old John examined the sixpence very closely, and he could not see that it was different from any other sixpence except that it was very bright and had a hole in it, but he felt *absolutely* certain that it was the sixpence he had had given him by the old woman.

Before he went to bed, he set it on the mantel-shelf, and he said to himself: "I will not part with you unless I am obliged to, for I feel that you have come from fairyland."

Alas! a day or two later, Old John found himself without any light at all. So he journeyed to the grocer's, and from the grocer he bought two penny candles. For these he gave the grocer the sixpence with a hole in it, and the grocer gave him four pennies in change.

Old John was rather sad at parting with his sixpence, and he made a long journey home.

But that night, as he sat mending his coat by the light of one of the candles, there came to the door a rat-a-tat-a-tat.

"Dear me, who can this be?" said Old John, and he set down his coat and went to the door and opened it.

And who should be there but the grocer him-

self. "See, Old John," said he, "here is your sixpence. It has sung me a song that I have not heard since I stood by my mother's side, and the price it asked for the singing was that I should give it back to you. So here it is, for the song was well worth the price." And with that he pressed the sixpence into the old man's hand, and hurried away.

Old John turned the sixpence over and over, and examined it very closely, and he could not see that it was different from any other sixpence except that it was very bright and had a hole in it; but he felt just as certain as before that it was the sixpence he had had given him by the old woman.

So he set it again on the mantel-shelf, and he said to himself: "I will not part with it, no, never again."

Alas! about a week later, he had to go to the butcher and buy some meat, so weak was he. The butcher was a disagreeable man who would never utter a pleasant word if he could help it. He gave Old John a very small piece of meat for the sixpence, and he did not glance at the sixpence as he dropped it into his drawer.

Old John was rather sad at parting with his sixpence; and he felt certain this time that he would never see it again.

So he was a very lonely and sorry old man as he sat that night by his fire and ate his supper.

Then there came to the cottage door a bang-bang-bang.

“Now I wonder what is the matter?” thought Old John, when he heard this loud noise, and his old heart beat very fast as he hurried to the door.

And who should be standing outside but the butcher, his face as red as the setting sun, and all his hair on end! “See, Old John,” said he, “here is your sixpence. Such a life it has led me that I scarcely know who I am. And the price it asks for quietness is that I shall give it back to you, and with it four half-crowns. Never have I had such a bother, never in all my life.”

And with that he gave Old John four half-crowns as well as the sixpence, and he hurried away.

Now Old John was rich indeed, though he could not tell how it had all come about. The four half-crowns the butcher had brought him lasted him for a long, long time; and as for the sixpence—well, when he had to part with it, he no longer felt sad, for he knew that it would come home—as indeed it did—every time.

*From “The Twins, Papa and Parker” by
Agnes Grozier Herbertson.*

The Bowl of Mist

“A hill full,
A hole full,
Yet you cannot catch a bowl full.”

Old Rhyme.

There was once a very beautiful Princess. She was dark, with flashing eyes and long black hair.

Her father was said to be the richest king in the world, and, as she was his only child, all his riches would one day belong to her.

They lived in a beautiful castle set among the hills, and from the castle windows could be seen the rounded hill-tops and the valleys between for miles and miles on every side.

The Princess loved the hills and valleys, and was never so happy as when she was roving about them alone and unattended. Up to her eighteenth year, though she was so rich and beautiful, she had led a simple life enough. But her father thought that it would soon be time for her to marry. He knew well that

there were many princes, some even quite young and good-looking, who would be only too ready to marry so beautiful and so rich a princess as his daughter.

On her eighteenth birthday the King sent for her.

“ My daughter,” said he, “ you have now reached years of discretion. It is time that you gave up wandering about the hills and valleys like any peasant girl—in fact, I was about to say that it is really high time you began to think about being married.”

“ Oh dear, no! I don’t want to be married at all!” said the Princess, with a toss of her head.

“ But, my dear child,” said the King, “ I have already received three letters this morning from three different princes—one from the Prince of Braganza, one from the Prince of Mottifel, and one from the Prince of Euphalia—each asking for your hand in marriage.”

“ The Prince of Braganza is an old fool and the Prince of Mottifel a young one. I have never heard of the Prince of Euphalia, but I am quite certain from the mere sound of his name that I should detest him. I marry one of them! Certainly *not!*” said the Princess, and she stamped her little foot on the floor.

“ It is certainly high time that you were

married, and learnt to control your temper," said the King.

"Well, they only want to marry me because I am rich and beautiful," said the Princess, tossing back her head again.

"And very excellent reasons too, my dear," answered the King. "It will be extremely awkward for me to refuse them, and may even lead to three declarations of war. You seem to forget, my child, that you are a princess, and that therefore your actions are of more than usual consequence. Yet," added the King, with a sigh, "though I may refuse the princes, you know that I can refuse *you* nothing. So if you won't marry them I suppose you won't; but marry *somebody* you must and shall."

The Princess answered nothing, but looked out of the window. Spread wide before her were her favourite hills. They were half-clouded with a clinging mist that made them almost look like mountains. The valleys, too, were full of mist; you could imagine them hollowed out to the depths of the earth.

"Very well," said she slowly at last. "If you want me to be married, married I will be; but I will only marry the man who will bring me a bowl full of mist."

"A bowl full of mist!" gasped the King.

“ Is the child mad? What is the use of a bowl full of mist?”

“ Through mist,” answered the Princess dreamily, “ everything looks far more soft and wonderful than when the days are clear. Hills seem mountains and valleys deep holes, and when the sun shines through the clouds of mist one can almost imagine oneself to be in Heaven. I would have a bowl full of mist always with me, so that through its softening beauty I might look at the whole world.”

“ The child is certainly mad,” said the King again, “ and the sooner she is married the better! Ah! Here comes the Lord Chamberlain. What shall I tell him to announce as the result of our interview?”

“ That I will marry anyone who will bring me a bowl full of mist,” said she, “ and that if anyone dare to ask for my hand in marriage without such a bowl he shall have his head cut off!” And, with a flash of her dark eyes and a toss of her dark hair, she ran swiftly from the room.

“ You hear what she says,” said the King to the Lord Chamberlain. “ She is quite mad, of course, but a reputation for strangeness does no one any harm in these days. Cause her words to be issued in the form of a public proclama-

tion this afternoon. I will answer the letters of the three princes received this morning with my own hand, and will enclose a copy of the proclamation with each reply."

The Lord Chamberlain bowed and left the room.

The King went to his writing-desk and set to work to answer the letters of the three princes, a task which he found extremely difficult.

After having written and rewritten the letters a dozen times, spoilt twenty new nibs, and bitten thirty penholders in half, he finally sent to all three the following:

"DEAR COUSIN (all kings and princes are cousins)—

"We thank you for your kind letter, received this morning, and for the offer contained therein. Our daughter is disposed to accept the hand of any suitor who shall bring her a bowl full of mist. We feel sure that you will be only too happy to indulge this charming whim, and that we shall soon have the honour and happiness of embracing you as our future son-in-law. Given this third day of October under our hand and seal."

Later that afternoon, three couriers, each

carrying a letter and a proclamation announcing penalty of death to any suitor who should present himself without a bowl full of mist, were dispatched, one to each of the three princes.

The following week the suitors began to arrive, each bringing a bowl.

The old Prince of Braganza came first, and before him walked a long-haired page carrying a golden bowl upon a crimson-velvet cushion.

The Prince was old and wrinkled, and extremely ugly, with one leg shorter than the other. He was received in state in the throne room by the Princess and her father. He hobbled up the long room, the page in front of him.

At the foot of the throne he paused. The page placed the golden bowl at the Princess's feet.

The Prince went shakily down on one knee. Then he winked one of his wicked old eyes at the Princess and said:

“ Fair Princess, you ask for a bowl of mist. Here I have brought you a bowl full of the misty cobwebs that hang about my castle. When you come to reign there as Queen they will vanish away. Your beauty and your wealth will make all things bright and clear for me, as they were when I myself was young.”

The Princess stared scornfully at the golden

bowl full of cobwebs at her feet. Then she kicked it over angrily. The cobwebs floated away across the floor.

“I will never reign in your castle, you silly old man!” said she. “I ask for a bowl full of the beautiful living mist from the hills yonder, and all you bring me is a bowl full of dead cobwebs. Go back to your musty old castle. Death is the only Queen who is fit to reign with you there.” She clapped her hands. Four soldiers entered the hall and led the old Prince away.

He was too staggered and surprised to speak, but he motioned to his page to pick up the golden bowl and follow him. The Princess never saw him again.

The Prince of Mottifel was next announced. He was young, and dressed in the height of fashion, with an enormous feather in his hat. But he had very little backbone, and no chin to speak of.

Behind him walked a negro carrying a bowl studded with diamonds, in which reposed a delicate gauzy silk veil of priceless value.

The Prince swaggered up the long room humming a tune and twirling a ribboned cane in his hand. When he reached the throne he pirouetted three times on one toe, and then,

with an exaggerated bow, took off his hat and swept the floor with its curling plume.

“Beautiful Princess,” said he, “you have asked for a bowl full of mist. I have brought you a bowl containing a filmy bridal veil of priceless value. In fact, I have spent every penny I have in the world upon it. But what need have I for private pence when you, with all your wealth and beauty, shall share my throne?”

He pirouetted once again, and the negro placed the diamond-studded bowl with the priceless bridal veil at the Princess’s feet.

She kicked it over angrily. Her breath came so fiercely from between her lips that the priceless bridal veil was blown in a twinkling out of the nearest open window.

“Never will I be your bride,” said she. “I asked for a bowl full of mist from the beautiful hills yonder, and you have foolishly spent all your money on a bridal veil. Go back to your ruined castle, and gamble with Death to get your money back again.”

She clapped her hands. Four soldiers appeared to lead the Prince away. He said nothing, but his mouth fell wide open with astonishment, and all the curl seemed to go out of the long feather in his hat. With his

ribboned cane he motioned to his negro to pick up the diamond-studded bowl and follow him. The Princess never saw *him* again.

The next day the Prince of Euphelia's arrival was announced at the palace. He had neither page nor negro, but in his own hands he carried an empty wooden bowl.

He walked straight up the long throne room, bowl in hand. He looked neither to the right nor to the left, but only at the Princess's dark and beautiful face.

As he passed along, the golden sun came out from the mists on the hills and shone through the palace windows on to his sunny curly head, and lit up his honest blue eyes. He was simply and plainly dressed. He knelt before the Princess.

“Lady,” he said, “I have as yet only brought what looks to you an empty bowl. What you require to fill it is difficult to obtain, but at the close of a year and a day from now I will bring you back a bowl full of the mist from yonder hills or perish in the attempt. I came but to see you once before I started. I may never see you again. My bowl is all I bring, but it is as full of love for you as I hope it will one day be full of the mist you desire so much.” He bent forward, took her hand, and kissed it.

Then, without another word, he stepped bravely from the room with his wooden bowl under his arm.

For the first time in her life the Princess had nothing to say. She was so surprised at the Prince's words that she had quite forgotten to clap her hands, and the Prince had passed out of the palace and on to the hill-side without being arrested or stopped by a single soldier.

She sat staring at the door through which he had gone as if in a dream. The mists had closed in again on the hills outside. The sun was hidden.

At last she roused herself.

"We will not see any more suitors for a year and a day," she said. And caused a proclamation to be issued.

"A very proper sort of young man that!" said the King to the Lord Chamberlain as the Prince left the throne room.

A year and a day slipped by, and at last the time came when the Prince of Euphalia was due to return to the palace.

The Princess was in a fever of excitement. A hundred times she went and looked out of the window to see if the Prince were coming. The day wore on, but there was no sign of



The Princess knelt down beside Him

him. A delicate mist hung about the hills and valleys, but it was not thick enough to hide the view of the road which led up to the palace.

At last the Princess could bear it no longer.

“He is dead,” she said. “I must go and find him.”

Putting on her simplest dress, she went out unattended into the fast-gathering twilight. On walking towards the hills she saw the figure of a man sitting by the roadside.

As she came nearer she perceived that his clothes were wet through, torn and ragged. He sat with his head buried in his hands; beside him on the ground lay a dirty little wooden bowl.

It was the Prince of Euphalia; but where were his sunny smile and his proud bearing?

The Princess hurried forward and knelt down beside him. The mist from the hills floated up and towards them.

“Could not you get a bowl full of mist?” she said.

“Alas, no, lady!” said the Prince sadly, without looking up. “The hills are full of it, the holes are full of it, but I cannot get a bowl full of it. I have been up hill and down dale. Among the hill-tops and in the deep valleys my bowl seemed full of mist, but

whenever I came to the town again it all disappeared. The time for finding the mist has gone by. I dare not go to the palace and say that I have failed. I told the Princess the bowl was full of love for her, and that when I came back it would be full of the mist she wanted. It is full of love still, but, alas! there is no mist there at all."

"Oh yes, there is!" said the Princess softly. "See, the bowl is full of mist!" She held it up. Indeed all things were misty to her at that moment, for her beautiful dark eyes were full of tears. The Prince looked up at her, and at that moment a golden glow shone through the clouds all about them.

"Is it you?" he said. "Have you yourself come to meet me?"

"Yes, indeed," said she. "If I had not come you would never have known that the bowl is full of mist—quite brimming over."

"Why, so it is!" said the Prince, for his eyes were misty too.

Hand in hand they went back to the palace. Of course they were married and lived happily ever after, and among the Princess's most treasured possessions was a little wooden bowl which she had once seen full of mist.

Ada Marzials.

The Secret

A young but powerful Emperor, who ruled over many great lands, once rode forth with his courtiers to hunt in the forest. As his steed was swifter than the horses of his followers, the great Prince outdistanced them, and soon found himself alone in a woodland glade, where a little stream tumbled over some rocks in a waterfall, and then ran murmuring onward. Great oaks grew by the brook, and under the trees a herd of swine snuffed the ground, seeking acorns in the long grass.

The Emperor, when he had ridden a little way beside the water, came to a great low tree which stretched across his path a wide gnarled branch mantled with green leaves; and on this broad bough lay a beautiful damsel fast asleep, the fairest damsel he had ever beheld. This was the poor maiden who had been set to mind the Emperor's swine in the forest. Poor she was in truth, for she was clad in a kirtle so torn that her scarlet petticoat showed through

the rents in her ragged gown, but she was not poor in beauty. Indeed, when the Prince looked at her, he knew that he had nowhere seen another as fair as she. So beautiful did she appear that he bent from his saddle and kissed her on the face without waking her.

Then taking from his neck a chain wrought of gold and gems, he hung it upon the branch beside her, and afterwards rode on his way to join his friends.

Now, hidden high up at the top of the tree a little golden-crested wren was perched, and he noted all that had passed below. All the birds of the forest knew how great and powerful was the Emperor, for he understood their speech, and would sometimes stop and talk to them, asking them tidings of all that was passing in the distant lands over which he held sovereignty. Therefore, when the wren beheld this mighty Prince kissing the poor peasant girl, he could scarcely believe his eyes, and almost fell off the twig on which he was sitting, from amazement. “I spy, I spy!” chirped the little bird; “I spy the mighty Emperor kissing the poor little peasant girl. Aha! Aha! he didn’t guess I spied him—what a fine, fine secret is mine!”

So sang the little bird, but the Emperor was by this time out of ear-shot, so he did not hear

the song. The wren, however, could not keep his secret. Indeed, so greatly did he long to pass on the news that he flew to his friends, the tall bullrushes that grew beside the stream, and chattered the whole story to them. "But don't tell, don't tell, of what I spied," said he. Then the bullrushes all stiffened their backs and whispered in shocked voices:

"Hush, you tattler! hush! hush! you shouldn't repeat such tales," and they looked so terribly severe that the little bird flew away with a squeak, feeling very much ashamed because he had told tales out of school.

No sooner was the wren out of sight, however, than the bullrushes became so much excited by the tale they had heard that they trembled all over. For a little while they did not speak, but at last, as with the wren, their longing to repeat the story became so strong that they said: "There can be no harm in telling a friend about this matter," and swaying gently over the waterfall they softly whispered the secret to him. "But don't tell!" said they.

The waterfall gave a little jump of surprise when he heard the words of the bullrushes. "Oh, hush! hush!" said he, and then he began to giggle very loudly. His friends looked quite pained when they found that the story amused

him, and that he did not take it seriously as they did. So they became sulky and silent, for now they were sorry they had spoken.

And the stream? Why, it flowed down towards the sea, and when it reached the ocean it repeated the tale also, for brooks are great babblers. "But never, never, never tell the secret!" it murmured, and the sea answered: "Who would think of such a thing! Oh, hush! hush!" For all that, the waves told the curly shells that lay upon the sand, warning them also to keep the story quiet. These shells would gladly have passed on the news, but the creatures that had lived in them were long since dead, and they could not move from the place where they lay. But shells must have good memories, for even now, if you lift one and hold it close to your ear, if it is a deep curly shell (for the wide shells were too shallow to catch and hold the secret), it will still try to tell you the story at once. Only, because all this happened so long ago, the secret has become very dim and indistinct with the ages, just as the words of a song, which you heard when you were very little, are forgotten, though perhaps you can still remember the tune. So it is not surprising that now the shells can only murmur what sounds like a

very long “hush-sh-sh”. They have forgotten how to tell the story properly, but they still know that they were warned to keep the secret to themselves, and though they cannot resist trying to tell the tale to another, they will still warn you also not to repeat it.

But if the little bird with the yellow crest and all the friends who heard and so mysteriously repeated the tale had but known the truth, they might have saved themselves the trouble of warning one another so often not to pass the story on. For the Emperor was so great that he never did anything of which he was ashamed that his friends should know. Indeed he would not have minded if the whole world had seen him kiss the ragged little peasant girl. But, because the wren and his friends were neither great nor wise like the Emperor, they did not understand how this could be.

When the mighty Prince reached his palace, he said to his courtiers: “See, my golden chain no longer hangs about my neck. I will give a great reward to the one who brings it back to me; but if I prove it has been stolen, then woe betide the thief!”

Just as he spoke these words, the poor peasant girl he had found in the forest herself came in, and, kneeling before him, laid the jewels at his

feet. She knew the precious chain must belong to him, for the Emperor's royal crest was embossed upon the links. The maiden believed, however, that the Prince had lost his chain in the wood.

When the Emperor beheld the maiden, "Did you come by this honestly?" he asked her sternly, holding up the chain.

"Indeed I did," answered the poor girl, and she told him how she had fallen asleep in the forest, and afterwards found the chain hanging on the bough.

"And what reward will you have for bringing my treasure back to me?" the Prince asked her.

The maiden answered: "A new spindle for my grandmother."

"She shall have a golden spindle," replied the Emperor; "but if you will you shall have a golden crown." Then, turning to his courtiers, the great Prince told them all that had passed in the wood the day he rode out hunting, and how he had left the chain beside the maiden to prove whether she were as honest and good as she was beautiful. "But I perceive she is indeed as gentle as she is fair," said he; "and if she will she shall become my bride, and Empress over all my lands." And this she did.

Audrey Dayne.

Fairy Fashbother

I

Primrose was her name. Her hair was yellow, and she was sweet and fresh as a flower.

Her house was little and tumbledown; they called it Ramshackle, and it was by the side of a laughing river. A gipsy had taught her to make baskets and cradles from sticks gathered in the wood and rushes pulled by the loch. These baskets she herself sold round the countryside. One morning she woke to find something in the cradle she had made the day before.

“ Oh!” she cried. “ Who are you?”

“ I am Fashbother,” piped a small voice.

“ Fashbother? Are you a baby, that you have lain in my cradle?” inquired Primrose.

“ No, I am only a lazy fairy,” was the reply.

Primrose laughed—and her laugh was so pretty that Fashbother took the trouble to raise herself and listen.

“ You laugh like the river,” she said.

“ Do I?” smiled Primrose, and laughed again.

“ Oh, I wish you wouldn’t!” protested Fashbother.

“ Why not?”

“ Because it is so beautiful. I simply have to sit up and take notice. And I hate exertion,” said the fairy, and lay down again.

Primrose went and had her morning bathe in a pool. She made weak tea and burnt toast, and offered them to her little visitor.

“ Oh, no, thank you!” said Fashbother. “ But, if you don’t mind, bring me in a buttercup of dew and a head of clover. I’d love those.”

Again Primrose went out—and brought in the clover and dew, which she put on a toad-stool for a table.

Fashbother sat up. She ate and drank, in no hurry but with great enjoyment. Down again she lay in the cradle of rushes. Primrose tidied and brushed, and dusted and shook, and prepared to go off on her daily rounds. She collected the baskets, but did not like to ask Fashbother to get out of the cradle—though it had been ordered by Mrs. Blinkbonny for a new baby.

“ You have given me something I always longed for and never got till now,” Fashbother said.

“What is that?”

“Breakfast in bed,” said Fashbother, and turned over for forty winks.

II

“Oh, dear!” sighed Primrose. And no wonder she sighed. If she had been busy before, she was twice as busy now.

Fashbother not only had breakfast in bed. She had dinner there. And tea too. Also supper. In fact she did not rise at all.

There she lay, so small and elfin, staring up at Primrose making another cradle of rushes for Mrs. Blinkbonny’s baby.

Primrose had to work half the night to keep two instead of one, for, after a meal or so of clover and dew, Fashbother had asked to taste the tea and toast. So by this time her appetite had grown, and she had to be fed, and her coverlet of flowers and grass changed; her hair had to be brushed, plaited, and tied with gardeners’ garters.

“Heigho!” sighed Primrose again. It was not that she wanted to be rid of Fashbother, but she was beginning to long for a holiday. And for shoes and stockings. And for a roof that did not leak. And for a door on its hinges.

“What is wrong?” wondered Fashbother, suddenly alert.

“Everything!” was Prim’s despairing answer.

“It is a long time since I heard you laugh like the river,” commented Fashbother.

“Yes, and I am sorry and ashamed that you hear me sighing now like a coward,” responded Primrose.

“Why do you sigh?” asked the fairy.

“Oh, I am tired, and poor, and a trifle hungry, and cold,” confessed Primrose.

“Do you mean to say you want to be rich?” cried Fashbother.

“I do, indeed!” said Prim.

“How strange!” whispered the fairy. “You will have trouble with servants, and princes wanting to wed you, and—oh! I know what it is!” she went on. “That’s why I came away.”

“Where from?” inquired Prim. She had always wanted to know but had not liked to ask.

“From Golden Castle, High Fairyland. I was a princess there, with jewels and gemmed gowns. I hated it. It was such a botheration; so I ran away. I wandered and wandered till I came hither and found this darling cradle. Here I could rest at last. I have to thank you for a long time of peace. But now it’s over.

You long for wealth. I can help you to get it, and I wish you joy of it!"

Primrose was overjoyed.

"Tell me," she begged, "how I can get it?"

"Follow the swallows," murmured Fashbother, and fell asleep.

III

Surely enough, when Primrose peeped out of the door, a flight of swallows flew slowly past. Primrose followed just as she was. Without a hat. Without shoes. But, as she walked, her feet became shod, and her rough, shabby frock grew fragile and dainty as a willow-pattern plate.

Down the river, and still farther down, went the birds. Sometimes they flew high, sometimes they skimmed the water. And Prim came behind, till she arrived at a bridge. Then she leaned over and looked down, her yellow hair drooping like filmy seaweed.

There below were golden fishes and silver fishes swimming about, while a little sand-martin flew low and whispered to each fish. The birds wheeled and fluttered, Primrose stood entranced, and the fish turned and dipped.

By and by Primrose noticed that the birds

had been lifting something all the while from the leaping fish, and storing whatever it was on their own black backs. What was it? It was pure silver and solid gold! Presently the swallows laid all of it at her little feet, so neat in the new shoes.

How excited, how delighted she was! Down she sat and made a huge basket of rushes in which to carry home her great wealth.

Quietly the swallows flew away. Silently the fish sank back into the water. Dusk fell, and Primrose walked home, carrying the basket of silver and gold.

But when she came to Ramshackle it was no longer there. In its place stood a beautiful house covered with roses. Smoke curled from each chimney, and every flower you could think of bloomed in the garden.

It was a dream of a house. But true!

Where was Fashbother?

Primrose searched all the nooks and every cranny. She scoured the garden, and at last came to the river bank.

Yonder, sailing off in the rush cradle, utterly happy, with eyes sweetly closed, was the little fairy, Fashbother.

“Oh, thank you!” called Primrose after her retreating figure.

"The same to you," called back Fashbother.

"You gave me this delicious house!" cried Primrose.

"And you gave me this delicious cradle!" called back Fashbother.

So both were pleased. The one lives in comfort and elegance, and the other sails about at her ease to this day.

Elsie Smeaton Munro.



The Peeping Gnome

The Peeping Gnome lived in a little brown house by the mulberry bush. The little brown house had a door, and a window, and a knocker, and a step; it was a very fine house indeed.

One day the Peeping Gnome thought he would like some jam for tea, so he peeped into his cupboard to find some. But, alas! the jam-jar was empty.

Now the Jam Merchant lived a long way off, so the Peeping Gnome thought he would borrow some jam from a neighbour. And he took his jam-dish, and set off for the little brown house of the Sing-song Man.

The little brown house of the Sing-song Man was by an elderberry tree. It had a door, and a window, and a chimney, and a bell; it was a very fine house indeed.

But, alas! when the Peeping Gnome got there, the Sing-song Man had gone a-visiting. So the little brown house was empty.

Then the Peeping Gnome was in a great way.

“ I see that I shall have to go all the long, long way to the Jam Merchant’s,” cried he, and he set off, dragging his feet and pouting his mouth, as cross as cross could be.

But when he had gone a little way, he came to the big brown house of the Three-eyed Wizard, and the door was lying wide open.

Then the Peeping Gnome peeped in, and he saw that there was a large jam-jar on the table, and the cover was off, and the Three-eyed Wizard was not to be seen.

Then the Peeping Gnome crept inside and peeped into the jar. And he saw that there was some jam in it, but not very much.

“ It won’t matter if I take just a little,” said the Peeping Gnome to himself. And he found a little spoon and leant over the side of the jar to put some jam in his jam-dish.

Alas! the jam was very low down indeed, and into the jar the Peeping Gnome fell, slithery-bump.

Then the Three-eyed Wizard came in, and without a word he placed the cover on the jam-jar.

“ Oh, wait a minute, wait a minute, I have just fallen in!” cried the Peeping Gnome.

But the Three-eyed Wizard seemed not to hear—though he heard all the time—and he

picked the jam-jar up and placed it on a shelf. And there it was.

Then the Three-eyed Wizard sat down by his hearth and began to sew at a pair of sliding-shoes. And the Peeping Gnome began to go slithery-slithery round the jam-jar, and he tried to climb out, but he couldn't. And he made a noise all slithery-slithery-slide, but the Three-eyed Wizard seemed not to hear—though he heard all the time.

After a time a knock came to the door, which was now shut, and after a moment in came the Washer-woman. Her wooden shoes made a great noise on the floor, and the Peeping Gnome in the jam-jar knew at once that it was she.

“Pray, neighbour,” said she to the Three-eyed Wizard, “can you lend me a bar of soap, for mine is nearly ended?”

Then the Three-eyed Wizard got up from his seat. “That will I,” said he. “I am always willing to lend to a neighbour *for the asking*.”

And he fetched a bar of soap from his cupboard, and gave it to the Washer-woman.

Then the Peeping Gnome began to slithery-slide round the jam-jar; and he tried to climb out, but he couldn't. And he cried: “Washer-woman, Washer-woman, help me out, help me out!”

“ Dear me, what a funny kind of noise! It seems to come from that jam-jar on the shelf,” said the Washer-woman.

Then the Three-eyed Wizard listened; but he seemed to hear nothing—though he heard all the time—and he said: “ That jar is only for jam, and it is nearly empty.” And with that he began again to sew.

So the Washer-woman went away. And after a while there came another knock to the door, and in walked the Donkey-man. His heavy clogs made a noise on the floor, and the Peeping Gnome in the jam-jar knew at once who it was.

“ Pray, neighbour,” said the Donkey-man to the Three-eyed Wizard, “ can you lend me a candle for my lantern, for mine has fallen out, and it will be dark before I reach the town.”

Then the Three-eyed Wizard got up from his seat. “ That will I,” said he. “ I am always willing to lend to a neighbour *for the asking*.”

And he fetched a candle from his cupboard, and gave it to the Donkey-man.

Then the Peeping Gnome began to go slithery-slithery-slide round the jam-jar, and he tried to climb out, but he couldn’t. And he cried: “ Donkey-man, Donkey-man, help me out, help me out!”

“ Dear me, what a funny kind of noise!” said

the Donkey-man. "It seems to come from that jam-jar on the shelf."

Then the Three-eyed Wizard listened; but he seemed to hear nothing—though he heard all the time—and he said: "That jar is only for jam, and it is nearly empty." And with that he began again to sew.

So the Donkey-man went away. And after a while there came another knock to the door, and in walked the Apple-wife. Her high heels made a tip-tap on the floor, and the Peeping Gnome in the jam-jar knew at once that it was she.

"See, neighbour," said she, "I have come to pay back the jam you lent me. And I have to thank you for lending it."

"Ah," said the Three-eyed Wizard, "I am always willing to lend to a neighbour *for the asking*."

And with that he fetched the jam-jar from the shelf; and he whipped off the cover, and in a trice he had poured into the jam-jar, all in a dollop, the jam the Apple-wife had brought.

Then the Peeping Gnome gave a gasp and a cry, and, all covered with jam, he scrambled out of the Three-eyed Wizard's jam-jar and dropped from the table, and went sticky-hop over the floor and out at the door.

"Dear me," cried the Apple-wife, with a dreadful start, "what is that that has come out of your jam-jar? I have never seen such an object in all my life!"

Then the Three-eyed Wizard looked here and there, and he seemed to notice nothing—though he noticed all the time. And he said: "That jar is only for jam, and it is nearly full." And with that he put the jar back on the shelf and began to sew.

So the Apple-wife went away.

And the Peeping Gnome went creep-creep-creeping all the way home, as sad as sad could be.

Agnes Grozier Herbertson.



The Golden Goose

Once upon a time there were two little children; their names were Robin and Joan. They were very poor, they had little to eat, and not one toy of their own. And they went out every day, through the woods and round the ricks, gathering straws and feathers, and picking up bits of sticks.

Well, one day they were out in a wood, when they heard a curious sound, like somebody calling feebly. And they looked and looked around, and they saw a poor old woman fallen down by a tree. She had caught her foot in a root, and had badly hurt her knee.

"We will take her home," said Robin, as he helped the old woman to stand.

"Lean on me," said Joan, and she gave her a soft little hand.

The poor old woman could hardly speak, she could only groan and cough, but she showed them where her cottage was—it was rather a long way off. And when they got her there at

last, they put her down in a chair, and set to work to do their best to make things cosy there. They gave her their sticks, for she'd dropped all hers, and Robin set alight a splendid fire; Joan swept the room, and made it clean and bright.

"I would like to give you something," she said, "for all your help and aid." But Robin and Joan, they shook their heads, and said: "We don't want to be paid!"

"I couldn't pay you in money," the lame old woman replied; "but there's one thing I can give you. Go into the garden outside. You will find a goose and her goslings; look at them well, and take the yellowest gosling you can find, and keep it for my sake."

All the goslings were yellow—it was very hard to say which of them was yellowest. But they carried one away, a nice little cosy fluffy thing, with dear little feet and beak, that seemed quite tame, and nestled up close, and softly said: "Queek! Queek!"

Their mother was rather cross at first. She said: "We've enough to do to feed ourselves; I really think we don't want a gosling too!" "But the gosling is such a dear!" said Robin. "And very pretty," said Joan. And the gosling said: "Queek! queek!" to their mother, in such

a gentle tone, that in the end she let them keep it. Oh! weren't the children glad! They thought it quite the prettiest pet that anyone ever had.

They fed the gosling carefully. When they'd only a bit of crust, or a small potato, they'd give her some; they said: "Of course we must!"

They gave her the name of Goldy, because of her golden hue; and the bigger she got and older, the yellower still she grew. And she walked about with the children, going prettily to and fro, very daintily and delicately, tip-tap-toe.

By day she played with the children, as tame as ever you saw. And at night she slept before the hearth, in a little box of straw. She was very mild and gentle, and never wanted to bite, except at daddy-long-legs, which she hated with all her might.

Goldy was very beautiful, but of course she wasn't much use. The mother said: "I quite expect she will turn out a golden goose, and lay us every morning an egg of shining gold. That often happens, or so, at least, in stories I've been told." But Goldy never laid an egg—she just went to and fro, walking gingerly and delicately, tip-tap-toe.

One morning Robin said to Joan: "Geese are always fond of going out a-swimming. Shall we take her to the pond?" So they carried her there, and put her in, and stood at the water's brim; and Goldy flapped and splashed about, but she didn't much care to swim.

While they were gone, something happened which had never happened before: a very tall, thin, old gentleman knocked at their cottage door. He was splendidly dressed in velvet and gold, but his legs were much too long. "Old Daddy Longlegs!" thought the mother, and indeed she wasn't far wrong. For that was just what people called him, when he strutted up and down, as the King's Lord of the Bed-chamber, away in the distant town.

He said: "I hear you've a yellow goose, and I should like to buy it." And he peered all round with his little sharp eyes—but nowhere could he spy it.

"It must be worth a lot," thought the mother. "No doubt it lays golden eggs, or he wouldn't want to buy it." And she looked at his long, thin legs, and pretended she was very deaf, and said: "Oh yes! no doubt!" He asked her over and over again—he had to bawl and shout, but still she couldn't hear him.

He said: "It's no use to stay—the woman's as deaf as a poker!" And he scowled and went away.

The mother told the children: "We must guard our Goldy well, for someone may want to steal her—they may! you never can tell!" So they never let her go out by herself; but she didn't mind a bit. She was just as good as she was yellow, and quite content to sit in the chimney corner by Robin and Joan, watching the embers glow—or to walk with them gingerly round the cottage, tip-tap-toe.

But they all grew poorer and poorer—they had scarcely food and drink; and their father, who was a woodman, which I haven't mentioned, I think, fell from a tree and broke his leg, and was very, very ill. But the children somehow contrived, through all, to feed their Goldy still.

At last the mother said to Robin: "We have nothing left in the house. There isn't as much in the cupboard as would feed a baby mouse. We shall have to sell our yellow goose, for she is all we've got. So you must take her to market. She ought to sell for a lot!"

Robin and Joan both cried at this; they were full of trouble and bother. But they thought: "It can't be helped, that's plain!" And they

tried to comfort each other. And they set out sadly together, away to the distant town, and Robin carried Goldy as they trudged up hill and down.

And curious things began to happen. Out of a hole in the rocks a bushy tail came whisking—and there was a great red fox. He made a grab at Goldy, but she flew up a tree. And the fox went off, and they heard him say: “That goose is not for me!”

Then they met a little dwarf, ugly and cross and fat. And he said: “You sell your goose to me, and I will give you *that!*” And he held up a crooked sixpence. But Goldy bit his knee; and he went away, and they heard him say: “That goose is not for me!”

It was very late and dark and cold, with not a star overhead, when at last they reached the gates of the town; and the folks were all in bed. They were so tired and hungry that they could only creep to a doorstep in an archway, and there they went to sleep.

But in the middle of the night, Robin and Joan awoke. Somebody said: “You follow me.” Who could it be that spoke? There was Goldy standing, very yellow and proud, and she said again: “You follow me!” speaking quite plain and loud.



The Children follow Goldy

So they followed her through the streets, by a way she seemed to know, walking prettily, walking daintily, tip-tap-toe.

They met a grim old watchman, and he called: "In the King's name, stand!" And he turned a ray of light on them, from the lantern in his hand. "Tell me your name and business," he said, "or I'll clap you in jail—I will!" But Goldy hissed out "SSsh!" at him—and the watchman remained quite still.

Then they came to the Palace door, and the sentry on the stair aimed his blunderbuss at them, and shouted: "Who goes there? Tell me the password at once," he said, "or I'll shoot you down—I will!" But Goldy hissed out "SSsh!" at him—and the sentry became quite still.

And at the top of the marble stairs, by the door of the King and Queen, they met the Lord of the Bedchamber—you know the man I mean—the thin Old Daddy Longlegs. He stared with all his eyes, and they saw his face in the lamplight, full of anger and surprise.

But Goldy twisted and bit his hand, suddenly, unawares—and said: "Take him by the left leg and throw him down the stairs!" And so they did at once, you may be sure, with a right

good will! And he fell and sprained his ankle—so *he* remained quite still.

Then Goldy walked up to the King. “SSStroke me!” she said. The King thought it was part of his dream, and he softly stroked her head. Then she walked up to the Queen. “Kiss me!” she cried. The Queen thought it was part of her dream, and kissed her face, each side.

Then the air became quite thick with feathers. The children couldn’t see, because of the yellow feathers that were floating as fast as could be. But the feathers settled down on the floor in piles, all fluffy and loose, and when the air had cleared at last, there was no more Golden Goose; but a wonderful, golden-haired Princess was pacing to and fro, walking very delicately, tip-tap-toe.

The King and Queen awoke with a start—the feathers tickled them, maybe—and said: “Why, this must be our daughter, that we lost when she was a baby! Our dear daughter Auralmora is come back again to us!” And they kissed her, and they cuddled her, and made no end of a fuss.

Then the Princess told them a tale they were greatly astonished to hear—and no wonder, either, it was so strange and queer. How Old

Daddy Longlegs, when she was a few months old, had gone to an old witch and paid a lot of gold to turn the baby into a gosling. "Because," the old villain said, "if she is gone, then I shall be King when the King and Queen are dead."

She had *lots* of strange things to tell them—far more than I can write about just now—and the King and Queen and all the King's gentlemen and all the Queen's ladies were tremendously interested.

All this time Robin and Joan stood by, waiting and wondering, till at last the Princess introduced them to the King and Queen, and to everybody else at Court.

And she also told her parents how kind the children were, and how they had given her food enough when they'd really none to spare.

So Old Daddy Longlegs was seized by the Court police, and banished; and now he is very poor, and minds a flock of geese.

But Robin and Joan and their father and mother are healthy and merry and strong, and live in the palace gate-lodge, happy all the day long.

May Byron.

Fairy-helps

Once upon a time there was a boy called George, who was six and a half and very fond of climbing trees. He had a sister called Mary, who was six and a half as well.

But, though Mary was a girl, she could climb every bit as well as George. They had lots of trees of their own, and something else too—a little winding stream which ran through the garden.

One day, just after a rainy time when the stream was very full, and the sunny days had begun to come again, George and Mary were sitting on the grass-bank and dipping their toes in the water. They were watching the different things which floated by—sticks, leaves, and petals of pretty wild flowers—when suddenly a tiny little letter with a stamp on it came floating along. When it got to the place where Mary was sitting, it was caught by a bunch of weeds and small sticks, and she picked it up.

“What a funny little letter!” said Mary; “whom *can* it be for? There’s some squiggly

little writing on it!" And George looked very closely and read:

"Mr. and Master Brownie,
The Tall Oak Tree,
George and Mary's Garden."

This seemed very funny, for there was one old tree, taller than all the others, which George and Mary knew well. George nodded very wisely. "I think it means," said he, "that two Brownies are living in the old oak tree;" and Mary felt sure that he was right. "And that being so" (for George often said just the same words as his daddy), "we had better take the letter, hadn't we?" And Mary said, "Yes," as she mostly did to George.

So they got up and, taking hands, they went straight over to the tree. First they walked round it, but there wasn't a sign of a door or letter-box, so they decided to climb up and see what they could find in the branches. Mary went first and George followed, and soon they were right up among the leaves, so that no one could possibly have seen them. Up and up they climbed, until they both sat down to rest on a very high bough. Suddenly Mary squeezed

George's arm: "Oh! look, look," she whispered, "there they are! Don't say one word! Oh! do you see what they are doing?"

George looked, and just on the other side of the tree he saw two little men, who couldn't have been anybody else in the world but Mr. and Master Brownie. Mr. Brownie was sitting on a branch just by a nest full of new little baby-birds, and he had taken one of them on his lap and was feeding it out of a spoon, while the other Brownie stood by with a can of milk.

When the little bird had had enough, it was put carefully back in the nest, and then it was the next one's turn, and soon all had been fed. Then the two little men packed up their spoon and can, and said to the birds: "Mother will soon be back, dears; she has only gone to have her lunch, poor thing." And then they took arms, and walked along the bough until they came nearly to the place where George and Mary were sitting. So Mary stood up with the letter in her hand.

"Please, are you Mr. and Master Brownie?" said she.

The two little men gave a great start and looked dreadfully frightened, and then began to climb higher and higher very quickly, and tried to hide among the leaves.

"Don't be afraid," said Mary gently; "we wouldn't hurt you. We were sitting by the brook and this letter came floating along. It is addressed to 'Mr. and Master Brownie', and we think it must be for you."

The two little men stopped climbing, and one of them stretched his hand down as far as he could reach and took the letter.

"Thank you," he said, in a high squeaky voice; "will you wait for an answer?"

"We will, if you like," answered Mary; and the little man opened his letter and read it aloud:

"Dear MR. BROWNIE,

"Will you please come and mind my children for me at once, as I've got to go shopping?

"Your loving friend,

"Mrs. WATER WAGTAIL."

"Are you going?" asked Mary.

The Brownie looked very worried. "I don't see that we can," he said. "There's work to be done in the trees. We've promised to mend Mrs. Owl's hood before she wakes up to-night, and to fix the heels on two pairs of fairy-slippers

—and yet I should be sorry to say ‘ no ’ to Mrs. Water Wagtail.”

“ Could we help at all?” asked George. “ Mary could darn the hood, and perhaps I could manage the heels.”

“ Well I never!” exclaimed Mr. Brownie. “ That’s a good idea. Will you please come this way?”

George and Mary followed, and they were very much surprised to find that the big tree was hollow, and that a little ladder led down into it. The Brownies went first, and they soon found themselves in a most interesting little room. There was a table in the middle, with a sewing-machine, and needles, and cotton, and scissors, while in one corner was a little cobbler’s bench with everything for mending shoes. It was very cosy.

“ Here we are!” said Mr. Brownie cheerfully; and going up to a peg he took down a dull-looking grey hood with a hole in it, and explained it all to Mary, who said she was sure she could make a good job of it. Master Brownie then fetched two pairs of weeny silver slippers whose heels had been danced off, and he showed George just what to do to fix them on.

“ We must be off,” said Mr. Brownie. “ Thank you very much; and now that you

know your way here, perhaps you will come again and lend us a hand with the work. We are fairy-helps, and sometimes we are so busy we don't know what to do—what with the birds and the butterflies and the other garden-people."

"We should love to come and help you often," said Mary; and the two little men climbed up the ladder and disappeared.

So Mary sat down on a goblin's chair and began to darn, and George went over to the bench in the corner and began to hammer, and in about half an hour the work was done and they put the hood and the shoes upon the table.

Suddenly a tiny little door opened, and a squirrel in a cap and apron came in, carrying a tray with a little teapot and milk-jug and sugar-basin on it, two cups, and a plate of sandwiches.

"Thank you very much," said George and Mary; and the Squirrel, who looked very nervous, hurried away again.

So Mary poured out tea, and they had a little party all by themselves, and then they climbed up the ladder and down the big tree, and ran faster than they had ever run before, to tell their mummy.

Natalie Joan.



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BONNIBEL AND KEDGEREE

Bonnibel and Kedgeree

The harebell is exquisite, the bluebell is lovely, but Bonnibel was like neither.

Three treasures only she possessed: her pretty name, a heart of gold, and a black kitten. The pretty name she inherited from her mother, her golden heart she received from the fairies, and the black kitten she got from the sea.

Down on the lonely shore one day, she found the kitten miawing to an unmotherly world.

“Cheety!” called Bonnibel, “you are half drowned!”

“Miaw—miaw!” replied the kitten, meaning in cat language, “Yes, and that’s four and a half of my nine lives gone already!”

But dry and fluffy he was when, on the top of a pyramid of pebbles, she trundled him home in a wheelbarrow, to Junket Farm—where, for no money and little food, Bonnibel did all the work.

From then on, that live kitten became a dead secret. He grew to be a plump cat, but was

treated like a skeleton in the cupboard. Bonnibel dare not let so much as one of his whiskers be seen, for Mrs. Flitterbat hated all animals which did not fetch some money or do any work.

Bonnibel did not ever take to her pet food that belonged to her mistress. Each morning she fished a fresh troutlet from the stream, lifted a newly laid egg from the hen that was supposed to supply her own breakfast, and cooked—over a fire of hastily gathered faggots—a meal that smelt delicious and tasted galumptious. This meal Bonnibel longed to share but gave entirely to the cat, for as she said, “If it is bad for a hungry girl to sniff breakfast and not get any, it must be worse for a thirsty cat to live on a farm and never sip a saucer of milk.”

And, because of this mixture of fish and egg, Bonnibel christened her cat “Kedgeree”.

One morning Bonnibel’s hen laid no egg, and the stream produced no trout.

“Kedgeree,” besought Bonnibel, at her wit’s end and the beginning of a day’s work, “sleep and forget your hunger till noon. To make up for no breakfast, I shall bring you a big dinner.”

“Purrhaps!” replied Kedgeree, for he was

not sure of anything, but obediently he closed black lids over jade eyes.

Near midday, he woke. Pad, pad, he tip-pawed along to the far (and forbidden) end of the loft, and stared greenly down between beams, into the dairy: but never a word miawed he of what he saw.

It seemed as if it were to be late and not midday dinner, so long it was till Bonnibel appeared.

“What’s to eat?” Kedgeree inquired.

“Same as before. Nothing,” reported Bonnibel, spreading empty hands.

Kedgeree gave a silent miaw of protest.

“Did you not get any dinner yourself?” he wondered, for it was off that he had expected to get what could be called the lion’s though in this case it was also the cat’s share.

“As a punishment for stealing cream, I got none,” stated Bonnibel, bursting into tears. “And to shield you, Kedgie darling, I let Mrs. Flitterbat think I was the thief, though I knew it must have been you.”

“Meeyow?” objected Kedgeree, indignantly, “It was neither of us.”

Bonnibel’s tears dried.

“Who could it be?” she murmured, and Kedgeree whispered the answer.

It did not take long for him to lead the way along the loft.

Quietly, Bonnibel entered the farm kitchen.

"What do you want at this time of day?" asked Mrs. Flitterbat, over at the fire.

"A good dinner for pussy and myself."

"What will you do if I don't give it to you?"

"I'll unfasten the doors of the dairy, where are imprisoned the two ragamuffins who stole your cream, and who are now planning to take all your money," said Bonnibel.

Trembling, the old woman handed Bonnibel a plate of steaming soup.

"And what will you do if I don't give anything to your cat?" she ventured, as a last shot.

"I'll order him not to kill the mouse that is just behind you."

"Ooch!" yelled Mrs. Flitterbat.

So old Mrs. Flitterbat mended her ways and patched Bonnibel's frock. She gave the child less to do and more to eat, and the cat got every morning his little dish of kedgeree.

As for Bonnibel, the fairies have changed the cream of her cheeks to rose, and turned the red of her hair to gold. So now, though the harebell is exquisite and the bluebell lovely, Bonnibel is more beautiful than either.

E. S. M.

The Three Gifts

Once there lived a King who had three daughters, and, as they were all born on the same day, he could not make up his mind to whom to leave the crown.

King Sapiens sat sipping his coffee under the blossoming lime trees one summer evening.

“ My dear,” he said to his wife, Queen Amorette, “ I know what I’ll do. After the good old-fashioned way of our ancestors, I’ll send my three daughters out into the world, and leave the crown to the one who brings home the best gift.”

The King never allowed the grass to grow under his feet; so the very next morning, when the Princesses—Jocelyn, Joan, and Joyce—came to make their morning curtsy to the King and Queen, Sapiens said briskly:

“ Now, my dears, you are going on a long journey to-day—out into the wide world, in fact—so get ready, and in an hour’s time you may depart.”

“ Oh!” cried the Princesses in a breath.

"And go as you like—just as you like;" and King Sapiens dismissed them with a nod, and turned his attention to his Ministers of State.

Princess Jocelyn ordered a coach and six white horses, and departed in grand style, after dutifully kissing her father and mother. After bidding them farewell, Princess Joan rode forth on horseback, attended by two maids of honour, and four noble knights.

But Princess Joyce just caught up her shady garden hat and walked away; then she ran back for another kiss and hug before finally leaving her father and mother.

"Dear child," said the Queen, smoothing her ruffled laces.

"She's a trifle startling and sudden in her ways," said the King, straightening his crown, which Joyce had tipped sideways with the warmth of her affection.

Princess Jocelyn returned at the end of a week, bringing a pearl of great price which bestowed eternal youth and beauty upon its happy possessor. She had received it from the old blind King of the next kingdom, whom she had cheered by her sweet singing.

"A fairly good gift," said the King judicially; "youth and beauty always please the people."

A month later Princess Joan returned, bearing a dagger with a jewelled hilt, presented by a Prince whom she had helped to escape from some brigands, and whoever wore it gained certain victory over any foes.

“A good gift,” said her father. “A victorious ruler always pleases the people.”

And now they were only waiting for Princess Joyce. But the summer slipped away and still she did not return, although she had travelled scarcely thirty miles from her father’s lands.

One day in the early autumn she was resting upon a stile leading into a wood, when suddenly a quaint little figure appeared at her side. He was dressed in motley, and on each side of his queer-shaped cap he wore a gander’s feather.

“Oh! you have wasted your time, Princess,” he began. “It’s the autumn now, and you haven’t received a single gift. Princess Jocelyn has a wonderful pearl which will make her always young and beautiful. Princess Joan has a dagger which will always give her the victory over her foes.”

“Well, in that case one of them must win the crown,” said Joyce. “But I will go home and see who does get it.”

“What have you been doing all this time?” asked her queer little companion.

“ Oh!” said Joyce, “ I’ve played with the children, and helped the mothers, and rescued some animals in distress, and driven away naughty boys from robbing nests, and——”

“ Oh! Oh!” laughed the little man, “ you have wasted your time.”

“ I haven’t,” cried the Princess, jumping off the stile and angrily stamping her foot. “ And who are you who dare say so?”

“ Never mind who I am; but come here, Princess Joyce, and I’ll give you a present.”

The little man looked so jolly and pleased with himself that Joyce came forward readily, though she could not help thinking his gift could not earn a crown for her.

The little sprite bent forward and fastened one of the feathers out of his cap, just over the Princess’s heart.

“ Loving smiles and gentle ways,
Heart to brave the stormy weather,
Better they than jewels fair;
These are gifts from Ganderfeather.”

Then he kissed her lightly on the left cheek, and there a wee little brown mole sprang into existence, just like the beauty spots our great-grandmothers delighted in.

“ Oh,” cried Joyce, running towards the



Princess Joan rides forth

wood where her little sprite had disappeared
“ who are you—Ganderfeather?”

But a merry laugh was the only reply she received, and after looking for some little time longer she gave up her search, and turned her face homewards.

A few days later she entered the palace gardens, and amid general rejoicings was led into the presence of the King and Queen.

“ My darling Joyce, how brown you have grown! and yes, my dear child, you have ever so many freckles, and a tiny brown mole. What have you been doing?” And the Queen fussed round Joyce, and smoothed her hair, and patted her little brown fingers.

“ Where is your gift, my dear child?” asked the King, peering anxiously at her.

“ Here,” laughed Princess Joyce, touching the feather she still wore pinned over her heart.

“ That?” exclaimed the King, the Queen, the Princesses, and the whole Court in a breath.

“ Yes, that,” replied Joyce, still smiling.

“ Fetch me some scales,” commanded King Sapiens. “ We will weigh the presents at once.”

“ A good idea,” agreed the wise men of the Court.

So the Princess unpinned the feather, and it was laid on one scale, and the pearl belonging

to Princess Jocelyn was placed in the other. Up flew the scale with the pearl and down went the feather. Next the dagger was weighed, with just the same result. The feather outweighed them both.

Whilst everyone was murmuring and wondering, Ganderfeather suddenly appeared in their midst, and he began to sing gaily:

“ Loving smiles and gentle ways,
Heart to brave the stormy weather,
Better they than jewels fair;
These are gifts from Ganderfeather.”

And the people cheered lustily and shouted: “ Hurrah for Ganderfeather! Hurrah for Princess Joyce!”

“ They seem to like the feather better than anything,” mused the King, “ so the Crown goes to Princess Joyce.”

No one ever regretted the decision. In after years, when the Princess really wore the crown, it was agreed by all, that if Princess Jocelyn was the most beautiful Queen who ever graced a husband’s throne, and if Princess Joan’s husband was the most victorious, still the land governed by Queen Joyce contained the happiest people in the world.

Helen Broadbent.

Lamps and Magic

“And Herbert has given me this silver spirit-lamp and kettle for *my* Christmas present. Isn’t it lovely?”

Susie heard her mother’s voice quite distinctly as she passed by the dining-room on her way up to bed.

“Nurse,” said she, “what *is* a spirit-lamp?”

But Nurse was cross, for she had just been having a few words with the cook, and was busy trying to think of something which would settle that stout person—once for all.

“Don’t ask silly questions,” she said snappily, “and just hurry.”

So Susie said no more, but her brain was busy if her tongue was silent, and she pondered and pondered.

“A spirit-lamp? A spirit-lamp?”

Why, what was that she had heard before about spirits and lamps? Of course! It was quite plain now; she remembered perfectly!

Did not Aladdin find just such a lamp in the cave?

Yes, and you rubbed it whenever you wanted anything, and a genie or some kind of fairy appeared. What a lovely present! If only she could slip down and try it.

The clock struck twelve, and the house was very still. Susie sat up in bed and listened. No, not a sound could she hear. *Now* was her chance!

Very cautiously she crept out and put on her slippers. Then she stole downstairs, stopping every minute almost, for, in spite of her care, the boards creaked fearfully. However, down she was at last and into the dining-room. There was quite a nice fire still, and in the light she could plainly distinguish the gleaming silver of the new lamp. Why there should be a *kettle* with it was most surprising; why should one need a *kettle* with a magic lamp? Or anything else at all? But *was* it magical? Anyway, she could soon find out. Climbing on a small stool, she paused a moment, then took a deep breath, and, with a rather shaky hand, gave three decided rubs on the shining vessel—one, two, *three!*

And behold! There beside her stood a strange-looking creature, with queer pointed ears and a

pleasant but very tightly closed mouth. His suit was of flame-colour shot with gold and green, with cap and cloak to match.

“Your servant,” said he, with a low bow. “What does Your Highness require of her slave?” And there he stood waiting, with his arms folded, exactly like the genie in *Aladdin*.

“Thank you,” replied Susie, summoning all her courage, “I should like *first* a nice box of candied fruits, also some chocolates—coffee-creams, if possible.”

“Good,” replied the spirit, with another bow, then promptly disappeared, returning, however, in less than no time with two huge boxes—at least a yard square. They just filled the dining-room table. With a flourish, the spirit removed the gorgeous lids.

“Has Your Highness any more commands?” asked he.

“Not at present,” said Susie, eager to start eating, and with a final bow the spirit once more was gone.

“Well, of all the delightful surprises,” said Susie, digging out a crystallized greengage with a little fork. “I wonder if Mother *knows* it is a magic lamp? If not, it would be rather a good idea to order a few really handsome presents for her and Daddy.

Putting out her hand again, Susie rubbed the lamp, but nothing happened. Could it be that she had not rubbed hard enough. She pressed on it with all her strength. "He *must* return," she told herself. Harder and harder she rubbed at the lamp, weeping softly now and then.

"Why, whatever are you doing, Susie?" asked Mrs. Marshall, who had looked in on her way to bed, and Susie woke; for there she was, kneeling on her pillow and clasping the brass knob at the bed-head in her left hand.

"You were rubbing the knob quite violently," laughed her mother. "What *did* you think it was?"

So the whole dream-story came out. What vexed Susie most was that she had not eaten the goodies first of all; she said she might as well have enjoyed *those*, even if it *was* only a dream, and I agree with her, don't you?

Annie Ingham.

The Little Goose-girl

“Count your geese from time to time,” called the farmer’s wife; “a dozen all but one, remember.”

It was as well to remind Linda of this, for the little Goose-girl’s head was always running on fairy stories, and they made her sadly forgetful. As she led her cackling flock along, knitting as she walked, she often let her ball of wool drop, and had to return to fetch it. “Ga, ga! How foolish!” cried the geese each time.

One day Linda was strolling along, thinking as usual of fairy princes, fiery dragons, and the like. Lost in pleasant dreams, she never noticed the little, old, wrinkled Piper, sitting by the roadside—never even heard the soft notes of his fairy pipe. But her geese did! They stopped short, waved their long necks to and fro, and drew nearer and nearer to the player, as if a spell were laid on them; and when, with a grin, the Piper rose and sauntered away, they

waddled after him, to a goose—a dozen all but one.

Presently Linda looked round, to call up any stragglers. To her dismay the geese had vanished, and, though she ran this way and that, and called and called, not one could she find. The earth might have swallowed them up! In deep distress—for what would the farmer say?—she walked on, until she met the old Mushroom Wife, whom some folks called a witch. The two were acquainted, and Linda always said “Good day” politely whenever they met.

“Hoity-toity, with the sun shining, folks shouldn’t be crying!” said the Mushroom Wife, in her queer, cracked voice. “What is it child? Have you lost your feathered giddy-gaddies?”

“Yes, I have,” sobbed Linda. “Oh dear! I am a bad, wicked Goose-girl! Can you tell me how to find them, ma’am?”

“That’s as may be,” answered the other, drawing a tiny mirror from her pocket, and gazing earnestly into it.

“Ah ha! that rogue of a Piper has enticed your waddlers away; I see them marching after him. Now, if he gets them to the border of Fairyland, they’ll turn into fairy geese, and you

may whistle for them, my girl. You must run like a greyhound and catch him up. He won't let the birds go for nothing, either, so you can pay him with these," and the old dame hung her bag of mushrooms round Linda's neck.

"Which way must I go?" asked Linda, breathlessly.

"Throw your ball of wool in front of you, and follow where it rolls," was the answer.

Oh, how Linda ran, on her bare feet! The ball bounced and bounded up hill and down dale, and the little Goose-girl sprang after it. She was tired out, but at last—oh joy!—she heard the sound of the fairy pipe. She burst through the bushes, and there was the thief of a Piper sitting on the grass with the geese around him. "Ga, ga!" they cried, when they saw Linda.

The mushrooms proved to be of solid gold, so the Piper let the geese go; and Linda, again throwing her ball before her, led them home. So when the farmer's wife came out to count them, there they were, safe and sound—a dozen all but one. As for Linda, she had had such a fright, she was a much more careful Goose-girl after that.

Sheila E. Braine.

Little Tuk

A droll name, to be sure, is Tuk. However, it was not the little boy's real name: his real name was Carl, but when he was so young he could hardly speak, he used to call himself Tuk; why, it would be difficult to say, for Tuk is not at all like Carl. And the boy was still called Little Tuk by all who knew him. Little Tuk had to take care of his sister Gustava, who was smaller even than himself, and he had also to learn his lesson; here were two things to be done, and the difficulty was how to do them both at once. The poor boy sat with his little sister in his lap singing to her all the pretty songs he knew, yet every now and then casting a sidelong glance at his geography book, which lay open beside him. By to-morrow morning he must not only be able to repeat without book the names of all the towns in the diocese of Zealand, but to tell about them all that could be told.

At last his mother came home, and took little

Gustava. Tuk then ran to the window, and read and read till he had nearly read his eyes out, for it was growing darker every minute, and his mother could not afford to buy candles.

“There goes the old washerwoman home through the street,” said the mother, looking out of the window; “she can hardly carry herself, poor thing, and she has the weight of that great heavy pail of water from the pump to bear besides. Jump up, like a good boy, Little Tuk, and go and help the poor old creature.” And Little Tuk immediately jumped up and ran to help her. When he came back, it was quite dark; and, as there was no candle, he must go to bed. There he lay still thinking of his geography lesson, of the diocese of Zealand, and all that his master had told him. It should have been all read over again by rights, but that he could not do now. His geography book he put under his pillow, for somebody had told him that would help him wonderfully to remember his lesson. However, he had never yet found that this sort of help was at all to be depended upon.

So there he lay, thinking and thinking, till all at once he felt as though some one were gently sealing his eyes and mouth with a kiss. He slept, and yet he slept not, for he seemed

to see the old washerwoman's mild eyes fixed upon him, and to hear her say:

"It would be a sin and a shame, Little Tuk, if you were not to know your lesson. You helped me, so now I will help you."

And then the leaves of the book under Little Tuk's head began to rustle, and to turn over and over.

"Cluck, cluck, cluck!" cried a hen—she came from the town of Kiöge. "I am a Kiöge hen," said she, and she told Little Tuk how many inhabitants the town contained, and about the battle that had once been fought there, and how it was now a place of no consequence at all.

"Kribbley krabbley, kribbley krabbley!"—and here a great wooden bird bounced down upon the bed; it was the popinjay from the shooting-ground at Prestoe. It declared that there were as many inhabitants in Prestoe as it had nails in its body; it was a proud bird. "Thorwaldsen lived in one corner of Prestoe. Am not I a pretty bird, a merry popinjay?"

And now Little Tuk no longer lay in bed; he was on horseback—on he went, gallop, gallop! A magnificently clad knight—a knight of the olden time—wearing a bright helmet and a waving plume, held him on his own horse, and on they rode together, through the wood

to the ancient city of Vordingborg; and it was once again full of life and bustle as in the days of yore. The high towers of the king's castle rose up against the sky, and bright lights were seen gleaming through the windows. Within were song, and dance, and merriment; King Waldemar was leading out the noble young ladies of his court to tread stately measures with him. Suddenly the morning dawned, the lamps grew pale, the sun rose, and the outlines of the buildings gradually faded away; one high form after another seemed blotted out of the clear morning sky, till at last one tower alone remained to mark the spot where that royal castle had stood. And the vast city had shrunk up into a poor, mean-looking little town, and the schoolboys came out of school, their books under their arms, and they said, "Two thousand inhabitants"; but that was not true, there were not near so many.

And Little Tuk lay in his bed again; he knew not whether he had been dreaming or not. Again there was somebody close by his side.

"Little Tuk, Little Tuk!" cried a voice; it was the voice of a young sailor boy. "I come to salute you from Corsöer. Corsöer is a new town—a living town; it has steamships and stage-coaches of its own. Once people used to

call it a low, vulgar place, but that is an old, worn-out prejudice. 'I dwell by the sea-side,' says Corsöer; 'I have broad highroads, and pleasure-gardens, and I have given birth to a poet, a very amusing one too, which is more than all poets are. I once thought of sending a ship all round the world; I did not send it, but I might just as well have done so; and I dwell so pleasantly close by the port—the loveliest roses are blossoming round about me!'"

Little Tuk could see roses; their soft, blushing red petals, and their fresh, green leaves, gleamed before his eyes, but in a moment the flowers had vanished, and the green leaves spread and thickened; a perfect grove had grown up above the bright waters of the fiord, and above the grove towered the two high-pointed steeples of a glorious old church. From the grass-grown side of the hill gushed forth, as in clear rainbow-hued streams of light, a fountain; a merry, musical voice it had, and close beside it sat a King, wearing a gold crown upon his long dark hair. This was King Hroar sitting by the fountain, and hard by was the town now called Roeskilde (Hroar's Fountain). And beyond the hill, on a broad highway, advanced all Denmark's Kings and Queens, all wearing their

gold crowns. Hand in hand they passed on into the church, and the organ's deep tones mingled with the clear rippling of the fountains. And Little Tuk saw and heard it all.

All at once this scene too had vanished! What had become of it? It was just like turning over the leaves of a book. Now he saw an old woman; she was a weeder, who came from Soroe, where the grass grows in the very market-place. Her grey linen apron was thrown over her head and back; the apron was wet—it must have been raining. "Yes, so it has," said she; and then she began to repeat something very funny out of Holberg's comedies. Nor were they all she knew—she could recite old ballads about Waldemar and Absalon. But all of a sudden she shrank up together, and rocked her head just as if she were going to jump. "Croak," said she, "it is wet, it is wet; it is still as the grave in Soroe!" She had become a frog. "Croak!" and again she was an old woman. "One must dress to suit the weather," says she; "it is wet, it is wet; my town is like a flask—one goes into it through the cork, and through the cork one must get out again. But I have healthy, rosy-cheeked boys at the bottom of the flask; there they learn wisdom—Greek, Greek! Croak, croak, croak!"

Her voice was like frog music, or like the noise one makes in walking through a marsh in great boots: always the same tone, so monotonous, so dull, that Little Tuk fell into a sound sleep, and a very good thing it was for him.

But even in this sleep a dream visited him. His little sister Gustava, with her blue eyes and curling flaxen hair, had, it seemed, all at once grown up into a beautiful girl; and, though she had no wings, she could fly, and they flew together over all Zealand—over its green woods and blue waters.

“ Listen to the cock crowing, Little Tuk! Cock-a-doodle-doo!—look at the hens scraping away in the town of Kiöge! There you shall have a fine poultry-yard; you shall no longer suffer hunger and want; you shall shoot at the popinjay, and reach the mark; you shall be a rich and happy man; your house shall rise as proudly as King Waldemar’s castle at Vordingborg, and shall be decked splendidly with marble statues, like those that Thorwaldsen sculptured at Prestoe. Your good name shall be borne round the world like the ship which should have gone out from Corsöer, and in the town of Roeskilde you shall speak and give counsel, wisely and well, like King Hroar—and then at last, Little Tuk, when you shall lie

in your peaceful grave, you shall sleep as quietly——”

“ As if I lay sleeping in Soroe!” said Little Tuk, and hereupon he awoke. It was bright morning, and he remembered nothing of all his dreams; they were to him as though they had never been.

He jumped out of bed and sought for his book; he knew the names of all the towns in his lesson perfectly well. And the old washer-woman put her head in at the door, and nodded to him, saying:

“ Thanks for yesterday’s help, dear child! May the angels bring your best dream to pass!”

But Little Tuk had forgotten what he had dreamt. It mattered not, though; the angels knew it.

Hans Andersen.

The Lamp Man

Once upon a time there was a country which was plagued with wolves. So fierce and horrible were they, no one dare go out after dark. The King of the place offered a reward to anyone who would rid him of these pests. He would give half his kingdom, and his daughter in marriage.

One day a funny-looking man walked into the town carrying a lantern tied to a stick, which he had over his shoulder. He went to the palace, and told the King he would get rid of the wolves for him.

The King asked him what the lantern was for, and, when the stranger told him it was to frighten the wolves away, he laughed, and so did everyone else except the Princess, who rather liked the look of this stranger.

When night came, the man went into the woods with his lantern and waved it to and fro. Immediately all the wolves came rushing up to see what it was; but they daren't harm the stranger himself. He turned round, and, with

the lantern slung over his shoulder, walked down to the river. The wolves all followed him, and gazed up at the lamp which gave such a brilliant bright light that they couldn't keep their eyes from it.

So when they came to the river, instead of looking where they were going, they looked up at the light, and all fell into the water and were drowned.

Everyone was overjoyed when they heard, and so was the King; but he refused to keep his word and give the stranger the reward.

So the next night the stranger went into the street with his magic lamp, and it shone so brilliantly into the window of every little boy and girl in the town that they all ran out of the houses to follow the stranger. He had got his arms full of toys, and a big bag on his back stuffed with all sorts of good things to entice them away.

When the mothers found their little children were leaving them they made such an outcry that the King was obliged to keep his word, and give half his kingdom, and the Princess in marriage, to the stranger, who was really a Prince in disguise. So all ended happily.

Nancibel and the Cobbler

The last game the children played was "Hunt the Slipper", and Nancibel, as she drowsily climbed the steep stairs to the room she shared with Aunt Josephine, went on chanting:

"Cobbler, Cobbler, mend my shoe,
And get it done by half-past two."

She had assured her aunt: "I can put myself to bed quite well, Aunt Josie, I truly can;" and the latter, who was tired, had replied: "Very well, chicky-wee; I'll come along presently and tuck you up."

So Nancibel was alone, a thing which did not often happen, and, as she reached the top landing, still singing her rhyme, she heard a shrill little voice calling out:

"Yes, Ma'am, I see quite well that you have romped a hole in your shoe."

Nancibel was so taken aback that she sat down on the step.

"Who's that speaking?" she asked.

“Of course I shall do my best to patch it; but I’ve a big heap of work as it is, and all my rascals of men off to Dumbledum Fair, too.”

“But who are you?” cried Nancibel,

“You were singing the charm,” said the voice, “so why be surprised to see the Cobbler?” And into the light stepped a queer little man in a leathern cap and apron. Before Nancibel could stop him he had whisked her shoe off, and was shaking his head over the hole. “As big as a cart-wheel,” he muttered.

The little girl stared, then said eagerly:

“Aren’t you a sort of a fairy?”

“Excuse me, but I’m not a sort of anything,” replied the other stiffly; “just a plain, hard-working, patching, heeling-and-soling, mend-it-while-you-wait cobbler: everything done by half-past two. But as for this shoe of yours, if you could come along and mend it yourself, it would be an immense help. You see, it is an out-out size, and will take a long time.”

Nancibel gave a skip of delight.

“Oh, I’d love to come!” she answered.

“Good!” said the Cobbler, pleased; “just wait a moment till I’ve lighted up.”

Catching a stray moonbeam, the little man popped it into a tiny silver lantern fixed to the front of his coat. Then, grasping Nancibel by

the hand, he stamped hard three times. Instantly the board on which they were standing began to descend. It went so swiftly that the little girl closed her eyes, and held her breath. The next thing she knew was that they had come to a standstill in a lofty cave, which had several cobbler's benches in it, but no cobblers. At one end was a large clock, and in the middle a narrow table with a long row of the tiniest, daintiest foot-gear in the world—fantastic little slippers of all colours of the rainbow, many of them glittering with jewels.

The Cobbler glanced anxiously at the great clock, and put a tiny gold hammer into Nancibel's hand.

"Plenty to do before half-past two," he muttered. "You can sit at that bench yonder, Ma'am; you'll find everything to hand."

"Oh, but mayn't I mend some of those?" begged Nancibel, pointing to the dainty row on the table; "they are so lovely!"

"Please yourself, my lady," replied the Cobbler, already seated; "but get yours done by half-past two, or there will be trouble."

"Why?" asked Nancibel with curiosity.

"You know the rhyme," returned the other; "things in this country go by rhyme, not reason; in yours it may be different." And,

picking up the nearest shoe, he began to hammer away—tic-tac, tic-tac!

Left to herself, Nancibel chose a wee pink slipper, the heel of which had been nearly danced off by some active little fay.

“I’d better begin with something easy,” she thought prudently.

She found some gold and silver nails no larger than a pin’s head; and the little hammer seemed almost to work by itself. Tic-tac! The tiny heel was securely fixed; and next she stitched on a diamond buckle that was hanging by a thread; and then some silver bells had to be sewn on a pair of high bootikins laced with silver cord. After that she mended some fairy clogs in a very neat way; and so it went on. The time flew rapidly, and every now and then the Cobbler looked anxiously at the clock.

“We shall *just* manage it,” he declared; “but never again shall my rogues go to Dumble-dum Fair: it makes me too all-overish!”

“I don’t know how that feels,” giggled Nancibel.

“Ah, and you don’t know the penalty for not being up to time! However,”—the Cobbler gave a sigh of relief—“the job is just finished, and I shall be able to get on my nightcap. There, it’s half-past two! Down tools, please!”

Nancibel and the Cobbler 177

Boom! The half-hour struck, with a loud, deep sound, and the Cobbler smiled as he threw down his hammer.

But his face changed, and a look of surprise and alarm came over it, when a chorus of voices was heard:

“ Cobbler, Cobbler, there’s a shoe
Didn’t get done by half-past two,
And well you know what we shall do.
 Tick-tac tickety too!
We shall take a blanket and toss you high,
Up to the moon in the cloudless sky.

And the stars will twinkety-twink with glee,
When a Cobbler sailing aloft they see.
And the big brown Owl will cry, ‘ Tu-whoo!
He didn’t get done by half-past two,
He didn’t get done by half-past two—
So he had to be tossed, tu-whit, tu-whoo! ”

As the song ended, a crowd of laughing Elves rushed into the cave, and seized the Cobbler.

“ It’s a mistake! ” he shouted, red in the face;
“ I *did* get done by half-past two! ”

But the Elves laughed all the more.

“ Ha, ha, ha! What about the giant shoe with the hole as big as a cart-wheel? ”

The Cobbler and the giant shoe’s owner looked at each other aghast.

“ You are right, mates, ” said the Cobbler,

hanging his head, "I must be tossed: I didn't get done by half-past two. But gently with the blanket, lads, for it wasn't quite my fault."

Nancibel sprang upon the bench, crying: "It wasn't his fault at all, but mine; I forgot the silly old shoe. If anyone has to be tossed, it must be me."

The Elves danced and shouted with glee.

"Don't be afraid; you'll go up like a feather. It's all part of the game!" And with that, dozens of tiny hands lifted the little girl on to a dainty soft blanket, sprinkled all over with embroidered rosebuds. "One, two, three, and away!" shouted the tiny men, and Nancibel shot up in the air.

The roof melted away, and she went higher and higher, into the dark-blue, cloudless sky. The wind lifted her hair softly, and she saw the big round smile of the moon, and the stars all shining like diamonds. It was quite lovely.

And then someone shook her gently by the arm, and a voice, that sounded like Aunt Josie's, said gaily: "Sleepyhead! Taking forty winks on the stairs? Come to bed, child; and look, here's one of your shoes with *such* a hole in it; we'll have it mended to-morrow."

"Get it done by half-past two," murmured Nancibel drowsily.

Sheila E. Braine

The Queen Bee

Two king's sons once upon a time went out into the world to seek their fortunes; but they soon fell into a wasteful foolish way of living, so that they could not return home again. Then their young brother, who was a little insignificant dwarf, went out to seek for his brothers: but when he had found them they only laughed at him, to think that he, who was so young and simple, should try to travel through the world, when they, who were so much wiser, had been unable to get on. However, they all set out on their journey together, and came at last to an ant-hill. The two elder brothers would have pulled it down, in order to see how the poor ants in their fright would run about and carry off their eggs. But the little dwarf said: "Let the poor things enjoy themselves, I will not suffer you to trouble them."

So on they went, and came to a lake where many many ducks were swimming about. The two brothers wanted to catch two, and roast

them. But the dwarf said: "Let the poor things enjoy themselves, you shall not kill them." Next they came to a bees'-nest in a hollow tree, and there was so much honey that it ran down the trunk; and the two brothers wanted to light a fire under the tree and kill the bees, so as to get their honey. But the dwarf held them back, and said: "Let the pretty insects enjoy themselves, I cannot let you burn them."

At length the three brothers came to a castle; and as they passed by the stables they saw fine horses standing there, but all were of marble, and no man was to be seen. Then they went through all the rooms, till they came to a door on which were three locks: but in the middle of the door was a wicket, so that they could look into the next room. There they saw a little grey old man sitting at a table; and they called to him once or twice, but he did not hear: however, they called a third time, and then he rose and came out to them.

He said nothing, but took hold of them and led them to a beautiful table covered with all sorts of good things: and when they had eaten and drunk, he showed each of them to a bed-chamber.

The next morning he came to the eldest and took him to a marble table, where were three

tablets, containing an account of the means by which the castle might be disenchanted. The first tablet said—"In the wood, under the moss, lie the thousand pearls belonging to the king's daughter; they must all be found: and, if one be missing by set of sun, he who seeks them will be turned into marble".

The eldest brother set out, and sought for the pearls the whole day; but the evening came, and he had not found the first hundred: so he was turned into stone as the tablet had foretold.

The next day the second brother undertook the task; but he succeeded no better than the first; for he could only find the second hundred of the pearls; and therefore he too was turned into stone.

At last came the little dwarf's turn; and he looked in the moss; but it was so hard to find the pearls, and the job was so tiresome!—so he sat down upon a stone and cried. And, as he sat there, the king of the ants (whose life he had saved) came to help him, with five thousand ants; and it was not long before they had found all the pearls and laid them in a heap.

The second tablet said—"The key of the princess's bed-chamber must be fished up out of the lake". And, as the dwarf came to the brink of it, he saw the two ducks whose lives he had

saved swimming about; and they dived down and soon brought up the key from the bottom.

The third task was the hardest. It was to choose out the youngest and the best of the king's three daughters. Now they were all beautiful, and all exactly alike: but he was told that the eldest had eaten a piece of sugar, the next some sweet syrup, and youngest a spoonful of honey; so he was to guess which it was that had eaten the honey.

Then came the queen of the bees, who had been saved by the little dwarf from the fire, and she tried the lips of all three; but at last she sat upon the lips of the one that had eaten the honey; and so the dwarf knew which was the youngest. Thus the spell was broken, and all who had been turned into stone awoke, and took their proper forms. And the dwarf married the youngest and the best of the princesses, and was king after her father's death; but his two brothers married the other two sisters.

Grimm.

The Fire-flies

Janet lay in bed ill. The night-nursery, usually so gloomy at this hour, so cold and dark—at best with no more than a streak of moonlight thrusting itself between the curtains to make the surrounding blackness blacker—was aglow with the leaping flames of a fire.

To-night her mother had suggested to Janet that Nannie should sit up; but Nannie sitting still was much noisier than most people moving about—for the shiny belt round the substantial waist would creak, and the starched apron rustle, with every heavy breath—so Janet had said: “No, please!” Now she was left in solitary state, a bell by her side, and the bed drawn up in front of the fire.

She longed to be able to enjoy the unaccustomed cosiness and peace, but her legs ached, her head ached, and one minute she was shivering and the next intensely hot. She found it difficult not to cry when she thought of her woes. For to-night was Christmas Eve, and she would not have any proper Christmas—

just her presents on a tray, and a bowl of bread-and-milk.

Yet her spoilt Christmas could be borne; it was the thought of Switzerland slipping away from her which was heart-breaking—Switzerland, where she was to have gone with her Aunt Phyllis; Switzerland, where the snow lay a yard deep and yet the sun shone gloriously; where you could ride on a real toboggan down a real ice-run—rapturous thought this to one who had only tea-trayed down the grassy slopes of the neighbouring hill!—Switzerland, where she was to have skated, and perhaps learned to ski, wearing on each foot a great wooden shoe longer than herself; and all in the company of her beloved Aunt Phyllis. Not many people of ten years old could expect such good fortune. But to-night the Doctor had said that he *feared*—well, perhaps, if she obeyed orders and did not fret, she might be able to travel; and he popped into her mouth a little white thing, like the paper stuff on the bottom of macaroons, which he said was warranted to cure most little girls in a trice.

She pondered over all this, and turned on her side to watch the fire. The crackling and flaring had died away, and it was just one glowing red.

On the back of the old-fashioned grate little sparks were running about—children going to school, they were known as in the nursery—and Janet watched a pair who did not know their own minds, who ran backwards and forwards, always turning tail at the last moment—this time they ran away on to one of the quaint hobs at the side of the fire-place. How funny! There were sparks all over the bars, and even on the fender—why, there were twenty or thirty on the hearth-rug! Janet, somewhat alarmed, raised herself on her elbow.

“Lie down!” cried a tiny shrill voice; “we shan’t do any harm.”

“But sparks set things on fire,” said Janet.

“Don’t be silly!” said the little voice; “we are not sparks!”

“Well, whatever are you, then?” asked Janet.

“We are fire-flies.”

“What rubbish!” retorted Janet. “Why, fire-flies can only live in the tropics! Daddy told me so.”

Whereupon a wee red thing darted from the fender and settled on the rail at the end of the bed. Small as the creature was, Janet could see that it bristled with dignity.

“Have I not come from a hotter place than any old tropics? Have I not come from the

fire? Can I not fly? Therefore I must be a fire-fly! Children, show what we can do!"

Immediately clouds of twinkling sparks flew about the room, and whizzed round and round Janet's head, until she put her hands over her eyes and shrieked: "Oh yes, I beg your pardon; you are fire-flies right enough!"

"I am glad you have apologized," said the study in red and yellow on the bed-post. "You ought to have known better; of your father it could not be expected; grown-ups have forgotten all proper useful knowledge. Now," said the imperious lady, "we have come to escort you into the fire."

"Oh! thank you," answered Janet.

"We want you to be present at our fire ball."

A happy thought came to Janet: "Oh, but you see, I was particularly told not to get out of bed!" she said.

"How's that?" said the Fire-fly, sharply turning her head with its streamers of red and gold hair.

"I'm ill; and next week I was to have gone to Switzerland—and now I shan't be able to go!" and this time the tears welled up in earnest.

"Tut, tut!" said the Fire-fly, her voice quite sympathetic. "Does your head ache?"

“ Oh yes, I ache all over!” sobbed Janet.

“ Now then, don’t cry, there’s a good child! I can’t bear tears; they spoil my frock and give me a cold.”

So Janet left off crying and looked with great interest at the frock, which consisted of layers and layers of something filmy and silky—red upon yellow, gold upon red—and where the Fire-fly’s feet should have been there were two tapers of rosy-orange light.

“ It’s very beautiful,” murmured Janet.

“ I am glad you admire it. If you had continued crying, it would soon have been black. How many days have you been ill, child?”

“ Four,” said Janet sadly.

“ H’m, h’m! Has the Doctor seen you?”

“ Oh yes! each day.”

“ We can do better this time than any doctor,” and the Fire-fly preened her gauzy draperies. Then she spread her wings and flew about the room in graceful spirals, calling: “ Children, children, come and perform my behest!”

Out of the grate poured myriads of fire-flies, until the room was filled with tiny glimmering bodies and a subdued hum.

“ Children, take away her pain!” chanted the Fire-fly, as she hovered over Janet’s head.

Instantly a host of little creatures descended

on the bed; blankets and sheet vanished, and Janet could feel a gentle moist warmth as the fire-flies settled on her limbs. They buzzed and crept and crawled, everywhere giving little comforting pricks. Tenderly their tiny feet patted and stamped on her, and with their soft wings they brushed and soothed. The pain left her legs—her back no longer ached. Then on her burning forehead she felt a feathery caress—a gentle drowsiness crept over her. . . .

“Come away, children, your work is done!” a liquid voice crooned.

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In the cold grey daylight a little head with clinging black locks raised itself from the pillow, to see Mother and Doctor standing over the bed.

“Why, Janet, my darling, how long you have slept, and I did not like to awaken you. Is your head better?”

“Quite well,” said Janet in a surprised voice.
“All the horrid pain is gone!”

“Yes, that’s a wonderful medicine of mine!” muttered the Doctor.

Janet smiled.

Winnifred Mellersh.

The Dream Poppy

Old Angus, the gardener, was busy weeding. Mollie liked Angus very much. At first, when she came with her father and mother and Baby for this wonderful holiday in Scotland, she was a wee bit afraid of him; he was so old and so brown and so silent. But, after they had known each other a few days, Angus gave her a tiny spade and let her help him in the garden. He was old, and very wise; he knew the most beautiful stories, and he was no longer silent when Mollie came to talk with him in the garden.

And now they were going away. Mollie felt rather sad at having to say good-bye to Angus, and the garden with its rockery and pine trees, and the loch, on which they had sailed so often, with the great rocks and mountains rising behind it. But there was a gladness mixed up with the sadness too, for, after all, they were going home. It would be splendid to have the long ride in the train, and then at the end of the journey to

see rosy Cook and Martha the housemaid again, and to sleep in her own little bedroom, and to tell the children next door all about the wonderful holiday.

"So you are going away to-morrow," said Angus. "I shall miss you, lassie."

"Yes, we're going to get up, oh, ever so early to catch the train; so I am to say good-bye now, Angus, and I've brought you a keepsake." She put into his hand a brown pouch, and painted on it was an A and an M, in straggling red letters.

"I put the initials on myself," said Mollie.

"Well, indeed, that was clever," said Angus, looking at the pouch in great admiration. "Oh, and it's full of baccy too. Now that *is* kind."

He filled his pipe there and then, and tried a pull or two.

"Just the sort I like," he said. "Now I am going to give you a keepsake too, and it's one that you can never lose or give away. I'm going to give you a dream."

From his gardening basket he drew out a red poppy.

"You see that?" he said. "That's a Dream Poppy. It is seen very seldom. And I found it this morning, just in time to give it to you before you go away. Now, put that under your

pillow to-night, and you will have a dream to remember for always."

"Oh, thank you," said Mollie, with round eyes. Then, for she was an unselfish child, she said: "But if it's such a wonderful flower wouldn't you rather keep it for yourself?"

The old man smiled at her with his blue eyes that always made Mollie think of the waters of the loch.

"No, no, I have many dreams of my own! That is not the only Dream Poppy I have found. I can spare you one Dream."

So, thanking him very much, Mollie bore away the poppy very carefully, and put it under her pillow that night.

"It's to make me dream," she explained to Mother, who laughed and kissed her.

"Don't dream too long, for we have to be up at sunrise to-morrow," she said.

For a long time after Mollie went to sleep, nothing happened. She lay quite still in a sound, dreamless sleep, then suddenly she turned over, and her hand slipped under the pillow and touched the Dream Flower.

The next moment she found herself outside in the garden, walking down the rocky path that led to the loch. She was quite dressed in her shoes and socks and little brown overall,

and she held the poppy tightly in her hand.

And it seemed, as she went down the path, that all the flowers woke up and nodded to her.

“Good-bye, little Mollie. Come back again some day,” and the pine trees made a friendly sound, and she felt she knew them all like dear friends. On and on she went till she reached the loch, and there was a silver boat with a red sail, and a young boatman in gold and scarlet stood waiting to row her across, but, when she looked up, his blue eyes were the eyes of Angus.

“So you are really quite young, Angus,” she said.

“Yes, it’s only in the daytime I’m an old man,” he answered.

But they were already at the other side, and, as she stepped on the rocks, Angus and the boat vanished.

“Oh dear! oh dear! how am I going to get back?” she said; “and we have to catch the train so early in the morning.”

“I have been waiting for you quite a long time,” said a voice by her side.

She turned, and there in the dusk was a most beautiful child, with pale gold hair and starry eyes. He held a golden whistle in his hands, and Mollie saw with wonder that he had little gold wings on his feet.



EDWARD M. HARRIS

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"Pass on, pass on, O Children of the Night,
Farewell, O Stars, pass on before the Dawn."

"Oh, oh!" said Mollie. "You are lovely. Who are you?"

"I am the Little Wind that goes before the Dawn," he said, in a voice that seemed to sing the words.

Then he lifted the whistle to his mouth and piped a sweet elfin song. At the sound, the waves of the loch all broke into tiny ripples; a breeze blew Mollie's overall, and then she saw that the gold wings were lifting the child into the air.

"Oh, don't go, do stay!" she cried, then stopped short, for from the mountains, from the sky itself, there came a host of lovely children, some in blue robes, some in rose, some in amethyst; some with jewels in their hair, and all had gold wings on their silver shining feet, and they greeted the Dawn Wind as he sang:

"Pass on, pass on, O Children of the Night,
Farewell, O Stars, pass on before the Dawn."

Mollie stood entranced.

"Oh, they are the Star Fairies," she whispered.

And then, silently, suddenly before her, she saw the Dawn herself—the loveliest lady Mollie had ever seen in her robes of white and blue,

her golden hair falling round her like a mantle. She was crowned with the morning star, and her deep eyes looked straight into Mollie's.

"Oh, how beautiful! How beautiful you are!"

"Am I? Well, I am pleased to hear it," said Mother's voice, and here was Mother herself smiling down at her.

"It's sunrise, darling, so it's time to get up."

"I saw her," said Mollie. "I saw the lady of the Sunrise."

"You have been dreaming," said Mother.

There was a great hurry and a bustling to catch the train, and, when it started, Mollie found she had left the Dream Poppy all crumpled up under her pillow.

"But I cannot lose the dream," thought Mollie. "Angus said so."

Angus spoke truly. Mollie has never lost the dream he gave to her. She will always remember the Dawn Fairy, and the Star Children, and the Little Wind that goes before the Dawn.

Jessie Phillips Morris.

The Princess and the Muffin Man

The Princess Lovina was extremely fond of muffins; but she was allowed to have them only twice a week.

“When I am grown up,” she said one day, “I shall marry a Muffin Man, and have muffins for tea every day, instead of only on Tuesdays and Fridays.”

When the King, her father, heard this, he banished all the Muffin Men in the kingdom, for, though the Princess was not grown up yet, she was growing very fast, and had to have all her best frocks made with tucks to let down.

The Princess wept bitterly when the Muffin Men were banished.

However, she went on growing up as fast as she could, until, one day, the last tuck was let out in her best cloth-of-silver frock.

When the King was informed of this, he said that in that case the Princess was quite grown

up enough to be married. So he ordered the Court Portrait Painter to paint the Princess's portrait, and had copies of it sent to every kingdom for many miles round.

Though the Princess declared that the Court Portrait Painter had made her look a perfect fright, no less than six Princes fell in love with the portrait, and, having dressed themselves in their finest velvet suits, they mounted their horses and rode at top speed to her father's kingdom to ask the hand of the Princess Lovina in marriage.

The King received them very politely, and sent for the Princess. But all she said was:

“I am going to marry a Muffin Man.”

Five of the Princes came forward, one after another, and, kneeling gracefully on one knee, begged her to alter her decision. But she shook her head each time and repeated:

“I am going to marry a Muffin Man.”

But when it came to the turn of the sixth Prince, who was the tallest and handsomest of them all, instead of kneeling on one knee, and entreating the Princess to change her mind and marry him, he came forward, and, bowing low, asked:

“Can you make toffee?”

The Princess was so surprised that all she

could say was, "I don't know." Then she added, "Because I have never tried."

The Prince bowed again, and said:

"I am sorry, but I have vowed to marry no one who cannot make toffee. So I must wish your Royal Highness good day."

And before she could think of anything to say, he had bowed himself out, mounted his horse, and ridden rapidly away.

The five other Princes also mounted their horses and rode slowly and sadly away; while the King took off his crown, polished it on his sleeve, and put it on again hind before, and remarked:

"Well, this is a pretty state of things! Six fine handsome Princes rejected in one morning!"

"Five, Pa," corrected the Princess. "You forget that one of them rejected *me*. It was extremely rude of him—and I would not think of marrying him if he begged me to do so ten times a day for a month—but, all the same, I wonder what toffee is made of."

"I have not the least idea," said the King. "You had better ask the Chief-of-all-the-Cooks."

So the Princess sent for the Chief-of-all-the-Cooks, and when he came she asked:

"What is toffee made of?"

And he answered: "Toffee, Your Royal Highness, is made of butter and sugar. And it should be boiled in a silver saucepan."

"That sounds quite easy," said the Princess. "Order twenty pounds of butter and sugar and a dozen new silver saucepans. I am going to learn how to make toffee."

But the Princess found that it was not so easy as she had expected. She burnt the butter and sugar, she burnt the bottoms of all the silver saucepans, she burnt her face, and she burnt her fingers; and the King complained very much because the grocer's and the saucepan-maker's bills were so heavy; and also because everything—including the Princess herself—was so sticky.

But all the poor children for miles round rejoiced, because every morning they came to the palace, and the Princess distributed among them the burnt toffee she had made the day before.

Still the Princess stuck to the toffee-making, and before she had quite used up another twenty pounds of butter and sugar, or burnt the bottoms of the second dozen saucepans, she found that she was able to make quite excellent toffee.

Then, one day, she heard the sound of a

muffin bell. At first she could not believe her ears; but there was no mistake about it, and, as she threw up the window and leaned out, she saw someone coming down the street dressed all in white, with a flat, white cook's cap. He was carrying on his head a tray covered with green baize, which hid his face, and was ringing a bell.

He saw the Princess leaning out of the window, and asked:

“Does Your Royal Highness want any muffins?”

“Oh yes,” said the Princess, clapping her hands. “But I have spent all this week's pocket-money, and I can't pay for them.”

“That is of no consequence whatever,” said the Muffin Man.

“Unless,” went on the Princess, “you would like some toffee? It is quite fresh and my own make.”

“I should prefer it to anything else,” said the Muffin Man. “I am passionately fond of toffee.”

“Then catch,” said the Princess.

And she threw him down a piece. But, in catching it, the tray overbalanced, and most of the muffins were scattered in the road.

The Princess gave a cry of disappointment, and then a cry of surprise.

For the Muffin Man was none other than the sixth Prince!

"Not only do I *like* muffins," he said, when he and the Princess and the King, her father, a little later were all three sitting at tea together, and were eating buttered muffins—enough having been saved for that purpose, "but I have learned how to make them."

"And I," said the Princess, with a blush, "have learned to make toffee."

"In that case," said the King, as he helped himself to another muffin, "it seems to me that all you have to do is to get married and live happily ever after."

And so they did.

Ada Leonora Harris.



The House in the Pond

Once upon a time a girl called Janie lived in a dear old white house. It had a slanting roof and green shutters, and short mauve curtains in the windows, and an iron gate with a bell to it. Just outside this gate lay a beautiful wide clear pond with willow trees all round, so that, if Janie wanted to sail a boat, everything was quite ready, for there were always lots of little breezes waiting to fill the sails.

Once the pond had made Janie cry for days and days, for she dropped her dear doll, Jessie, right in, and Harold, her brother, had lost his best tin soldier in the same way very soon after. But apart from these two sorrows it was lovely to have the pond.

In the spring-time clumps of primroses grew round the edge. Later, in the summer, Janie and Harold would push the old punt out and lie down and read under the willows; and, in the autumn, leaves went scudding about on the water, like little brown ships hurrying to some

fairy harbour. Also—and this was the most interesting thing of all—you could see Janie's own little white house all upside-down in the pond!

Janie often used to sit at the root of one of the willows and watch upside-down birds flying across the upside-down sky, and one day she was doing this when something rather queer happened. She was looking lazily into the water, and thinking to herself how queer it would be to try to climb an upside-down tree, when she was surprised to see a baker's cart drive up to the door of the house in the pond. There was certainly no cart outside her real house to be looking-glassed by the water, and, besides, this was such a curious-looking cart, for the horse was not a horse at all, but a water-rat, and the baker was an enormous water-spider, who jumped down from the cart and began to fill his basket with loaves. Then he hurried into the side gate of the house in the pond, and Janie leaned so far over the side to watch him that she overbalanced and fell right in.

Once, when she was three and a half, she had slipped into the pond and had a bad wetting, and it had been very alarming and uncomfortable; but now she was very much surprised to find herself sinking in rather a pleasant manner

down through the water, and she didn't even feel damp! It was, in fact, more like going slowly down in a lift than falling into a pond, and she hoped so much that no one would come and rescue her before she had seen what was at the bottom.

Then she found herself sitting comfortably on the lawn outside the house in the pond.

The queer little baker's cart was still there, and the water-spider baker hurried out at that moment and touched his cap to her, as if he knew her quite well.

"Good afternoon!" said Janie; "could you tell me——?" but the baker was so busy that he seemed not to hear her, and hurried away.

Janie looked up at the house. It was hers, that was quite certain, but everything was upside-down—the windows, the front door, and the gate. "And yet *somebody* must live here," thought Janie, "or they wouldn't want bread!"

It seemed quite the right thing to do, so she went up the steps and gave a firm rat-tat. In a few moments she heard hard little footsteps coming along the hall, and then the door was opened wide. Janie looked in curiously. The housemaid who opened the door was a doll.

"If you please," said Janie, "may I see the

lady who lives here?" The housemaid stared hard at her for a moment, and then said in a jerky little voice: "Come in, please," and led the way into the drawing-room. "What name, please?" she asked. "Janie," said the little girl, feeling exactly like a grown-up visitor; and the doll shut the door and went away, making a hard little stump-stump noise along the hall.

It was the queerest drawing-room Janie had ever seen. To begin with, the floor was the ceiling, and the ceiling was the floor, and the pictures were hanging up the wall instead of down, and did not fall! "Fancy, I'm walking on the ceiling!" said Janie to herself, "like a fly." She could have amused herself for quite a long time in the queer room, but suddenly the door opened and in walked the lady of the house. "Jessie! Oh! Jessie dear!" cried Janie, and so it was! Her own lost doll who had been drowned in the pond! Jessie flung out her lovely jointed arms and they hugged each other round the neck. "Oh, Jessie!" exclaimed Janie at last. "You weren't drowned after all! What a good thing there was the house for you to live in!"

"Yes," answered Jessie. "But, oh! it was so lonely at first, and I missed you so dreadfully! Fancy living in a house all alone! Then I found

that another little girl had dropped her doll in years and years ago; and, as she was living here, she became my housemaid. Then one day something lovely happened. I was sitting in the garden all alone, when down came a tin soldier."

"That was Harold's best General," exclaimed Janie. "We fished and fished, but we never found him."

"After that I was lonely no more," said Jessie, "for we were married at St. Topsy-Turvy's over there, and now we are living happily ever after. Ah! here he comes." And in walked Harold's tin soldier and made a grand salute to Janie. Yes, he was very fine; almost like a king, so gay and kind and charming. "Now let us go and see the children," said Jessie, and they all hurried off to the nursery. There was a great noise of scampering and shouting inside the room, and Janie thought she had never seen such a wonderful sight as when the door opened. The room was like a great big doll's house, and the dolls were, oh! so lovely. Dark-haired dolls and light-haired dolls, dressed simply beautifully, while lots of little tin soldier brothers, exactly like the General, were scampering about. There were baby dolls with long clothes and feeding-



The Doll-baby

bottles, cradles, cribs, and prams. A doll's tea-set was neatly laid out on the table, and leading out of the nursery was a doll's bathroom with sponges and soap. A fat doll nurse was busily making Mellin's food on a little stove, and the baby was saying "Ma-ma-da-da!" in a doll's bassinette.

Jessie and the General walked on their feet, of course, because they had once been in the right-way-up world, but it was very curious to see how happily the children sometimes ran across the nursery on their hands, with their feet in the air; in fact they seemed almost happier the wrong way up. Janie had never enjoyed herself so much in all her life, for the dolls simply loved her, and they played games,

and then had real tea out of the dolls' cups.

When it was time to go, and the nurse had let Janie help put the baby doll to bed, she said: "Good-bye, Jessie dear! I wish you could come and see me; do you think you could one day?"

"We shall be delighted!" said Jessie. "If you will push the punt over the pond, to the place where you fell in at three o'clock to-morrow, we will be waiting for you. We wondered how long it would be before you found us out, and it was a lucky thing that you happened to fall in just under the enchanted willow, for otherwise you would have had nothing but a bad wetting and a cold!"

Then they took Janie out on to the little lawn, and in a minute up she went and soon found herself in the right-way-up world again.

And the next day she and Harold pushed the punt over the pond and met them all—Jessie and the General (who was home on leave), all their children, and simply boxes of tin soldiers.

They had a most lovely afternoon, and, before the dolls went home, Janie and Harold had both learnt how to walk on their hands across the room.

It isn't half as difficult as it looks!

Natalie Joan.

Why the Robin's Breast is Red

One winter morning, long ago, while he was just a plain little brown bird, Fluffy, the robin, sat shivering and hungry on the bare branch of a hawthorn tree. He had had no breakfast. People had forgotten to throw out crumbs, and the berries were all eaten.

Snowflakes were falling round, but Fluffy was busy thinking and did not heed them.

It was almost time for Father Christmas to come again, and Fluffy was wondering if he dare go all that long journey to the Christmas Man's palace alone, just to ask him to bring a sack of crumbs amongst his toys. His brothers and sisters and cousins were all shivering and hungry.

Fluffy spoke to the North Wind.

“Which way do I take, Mr. Wind, to get to the palace of Father Christmas?”

“North, north, north!” shrieked Mr. Wind, and was gone.

Fluffy spread his wings and set off; he flew

for a long time, and got so tired that he sank on to the snow to rest. Then Mr. Wind came by.

“ Hallo! Hallo! Hallo! Tired out already? Get on my back.”

“ Where will you take me, Mr. Wind?” asked Fluffy.

“ To the north, to the end of the land, where the Great Whale comes!” he roared.

Fluffy climbed on to his back and closed his eyes.

Soon they reached the end of the land where the great sea laps its cliffs, and there they found the whale.

“ Whale, whale,” roared Mr. Wind, “ here’s a passenger for the Christmas Man’s palace!”

“ Will you take me, Mr. Whale?” chirped Fluffy.

“ Yes,” bellowed the whale, “ with the greatest of pleasure”

“ *Where* will you take me, Mr. Whale?”

“ To where the seals meet us,” answered the whale. “ Climb into my mouth, and don’t slip down; it’s very dark.” And the whale plunged into the deep green sea, and swam and swam and swam, until he reached the seals who live on the edge of another land, half in and half out of the water.

"Come out!" bellowed the whale, resting his great fins on an iceberg.

Fluffy crept out, dry and warm as toast, and found it was neither night nor morning, just twilight all the time.

"Here's a passenger for the Christmas Man's palace," roared the whale.

"Seals, seals, will you help me to get there?"

"Yes," said the seals, "with the greatest of pleasure!"

"Where will you take me?" asked Fluffy.

"To where the White Bear Kindly lives," said the biggest seal.

"Creep on to his back, hold him by the ears; he's slippery!" laughed the whale, as he plunged into the sea and disappeared.

So Fluffy held on to the seal's ears, and the seal took him over the snow and ice till they reached White Bear Kindly.

White Bear Kindly was rolling on his back, sending up clouds of snow into the air.

"Here's a passenger for the Christmas Man's palace," called the seal.

"Hey, what?" roared White Bear Kindly, looking up.

"Mr. Bear, do you know the way to the palace?" asked Fluffy.

“ Of course, of course; we all do!” answered White Bear Kindly.

“ Then will you help me to get there?”

“ Yes,” said White Bear Kindly, “ with the greatest of pleasure!”

“ How far will you take me?”

“ As far as the Reindeer Swift.”

“ Hide in his fur and hold on tight; he’s clod-hoppity!” laughed the seal, starting for home.

“ He’s rude!” grumbled the bear. “ Get up.”

So Fluffy flew on to White Bear Kindly’s back, and snuggled down in his long fur, and his tiny beak stopped chattering with cold, and he soon grew quite warm and cosy, while the bear went “ lopity-lop, lopity-lop ” over the ice until they came to the reindeer.

“ Here’s a passenger for the Christmas Man’s palace!” growled White Bear Kindly.

“ Reindeer, Reindeer, will you help me to get there?” chirped Fluffy.

“ Yes,” said Reindeer Swift, “ with the greatest of pleasure!”

“ Climb up and ride between his horns,” said White Bear Kindly. “ If he wasn’t so boney he’d be prettier!” and off he went, laughing, lopity-lop, lopity-lop!

“ He’s rude,” said Reindeer Swift; “ but

then, they do like their little jokes!" And off he set at a tremendous speed, with Fluffy safely between his horns. They flew like the wind over the ice. It was always night, and the stars were shining like bright lamps in the sky. It grew so cold, Fluffy was nearly frozen; but at last Reindeer Swift ran through two great glittering gates, and stopped inside the courtyard of the Christmas Man's palace.

In a moment a crowd of happy fairies surrounded them, and lifting Fluffy off the reindeer's neck, carried him into the great hall, where a blazing fire of logs was burning, snuggled him up in a fairy shawl, fed him with drops of honey and crumbs of magic, and made him feel better directly.

Then came the sound of laughing voices and singing, and the Christmas Man himself came into the hall in the midst of a troop of fairies.

He had the kindest eyes in all the world, and his lips were always smiling. He had a long white beard and a scarlet cloak, and wherever he went fairies went too, clustering round him.

"Tell me what you want, you poor little starved bird?" he said, and Fluffy told him all the story.

"So you want me to fill a sack with crumbs



The Christmas Man's Visitor

for the hungry birds and take it with me, do you?"

"Yes," said Fluffy.

"Well," said the Christmas Man, "I'll do something better than that! On Christmas Eve, after I have filled the children's stockings, I will bend down and whisper into each one's ear: 'Remember the birds!' and then they will remember you and throw out crumbs."

On Christmas Eve the sleigh was packed with toys, and the reindeer were harnessed, with their bells all polished, ready to jingle as they went galloping over the world.

The Christmas Man came down the steps in his scarlet cloak and hood all ready, and Fluffy was ready too.

"Ho! ho! fairies," cried the Christmas Man; "stitch me a little pocket in this cloak of mine, just large enough to hold Fluffy, so that he will not feel the cold!"

The fairies fetched their golden needles and a piece of red stuff, and stitched a pocket just in front of the Christmas Man's cloak. Fluffy crept inside, and only the tip of his beak peeped out. It was so snug and warm, and he felt the Christmas Man's heart beating all the way.

Then the reindeer started, and the fairies cheered, and they galloped away over the earth,

and the things Fluffy saw that night were wonderful.

At last they reached the place where Fluffy lived. The Christmas Man put him down, and scattered a heap of berries on the ground for a surprise, before he drove off, laughing.

Fluffy was so warm and so happy, and, where he had nestled close to the Christmas Man, his little breast was dyed red—just the colour of the cloak.

And so now you know why the robin's breast is red!

Dorothy Dickinson.



The Little Wishman

It was such an old saying that almost everyone believed it, certainly the grandmothers did, and most of the children. The saying was that on Midsummer Eve the little Wishman could be met with, and so a wish was sure to be granted.

“What’s he like?” asked Christina; but no one was able to tell her.

That was a very serious matter, because Christina was a Princess and an only child. The King, her father, frowned on the professors and all the wise men until they trembled; and they would have trembled still more if they had heard Christina saying to herself:

“As all these clever folks don’t know, I’ll just go and find out for myself. I have one wish I should very much like to be granted.”

Far away from the stately palace there was a little thatched cottage near the edge of the common, and here lived Janet, the goose-girl, with her grandfather.

“ Tell me about the little Wishman, Granfer,” said Janet for the hundredth time.

“ Nay, thee must find him thysen,” replied Granfer wisely, shaking his old head.

Many times Janet had thought of that, but there were so many things for her to do besides looking after her noisy charges that the time slipped by unheeded. One Midsummer Eve, however, she determined to try her luck, and set out an hour after sunset. How astonished she was to see no less a personage than Princess Christina in front of her, running across the common quite quickly.

“ She’s going to find the Wishman too,” cried Janet, and she hurried, by a short cut, to the wishing-gate that led to the wood, and hid herself among the bracken. In a very little whie, sure enough, Princess Christina came running along quite out of breath, and Janet heard her cry:

“ Oh! there you are, you dear little Wishman!”

Janet had seen no one except the Princess, but now she saw sitting on the gate the little Wishman himself. He was dressed in greens and browns, and in his cap was fastened a peacock’s feather. He had a merry face, with twinkling eyes, and he was merrily humming to himself:

Fairy Tales

“ If wishes were horses,
Beggars would ride,
And wear a King’s crown
With terrible pride.
The King would be tramping
The King’s highway,
Free from all care
With a heart so gay.
The Queen would be plucking
The sweet hedge rose,
The milkmaid be wearing
Her Majesty’s clothes.
The old would be young
And the young would be old,
And no one the happier—
So I am told.”

“ How do you know, dear little Wishman?” began Princess Christina. The Wishman doffed his hat to her, replying:

“ I know lots and lots of things, Your Highness, and I know what you wish.”

“ Will you grant it me, little Wishman?”

“ Well now,” answered the Wishman quite solemnly, “ we fairies do not use our power lightly, and you mortals are more tricksy and changeable than we are. You must come three times, and at the end of the three years, if you still wish the same thing, it shall be granted you. I will meet you here each Midsummer Eve.”

“Oh, but, dear little Wishman, I am quite, quite sure about it. If you knew how tiresome it is to get up every day, knowing each hour is fixed for you to do something, to go out when you want to stop in—why, he’s gone!”

So he had; and Janet, crouching among the bracken, was very cross to think she had let the Princess take up all his time.

“Don’t fret, Janet,” said the same merry voice, as she was walking disconsolately homeward. “I know your wish, and I tell you just the same. Come to see me each year, and in the third year I will grant you your wish if you still wish it.”

“Of course I shall!” exclaimed Janet, stopping short and gazing eagerly at the little Wishman, who stood in front of her. “It is so dreadful to wear old clothes, and sometimes have no shoes at all, and very little fire in the winter—why, he’s gone” And Janet ran home very quickly.

The next Midsummer Eve, as Janet stole across the common to the wishing-gate, she saw the Princess Christina just in front of her. She followed slowly, and saw the little Wishman sitting on the wishing-gate singing merrily:



"Very well, Princess; very well, Goose-girl!"

"If wishes were horses,
Beggars would ride
Away o'er the world,
And nobody bide
To keep the hearth warm,
And welcome the Sun
From the homely place
Where their life was begun."

"I still wish just the same wish, only ever so much more," cried Christina.

"And so do I," echoed Janet, glancing at her ragged blue gown and bare feet.

The Princess turned to look at her, and the Wishman looked at them both and laughed heartily.

"Very well, Princess; very well, goose-girl. Come to me next year, and then——"

“ I shall be free!” said the Princess gaily.

“ And I shall be ever so fine!” said Janet proudly.

It was the third Midsummer Eve since Princess Christina and Janet the goose-girl had found this little Wishman.

He was sitting on the gate as usual, with such a merry smile on his lips.

It was just about an hour after sunset, and the sunset colours still lingered in the sky, and were reflected in the pond where lately the geese had gabbled and fed.

The last rays had touched the old grey stone palace set above the village, and now curfew was ringing from the grey tower. Not long before the King had ridden home through the large grey stone arch, and Princess Christina felt her heart beat proudly as she welcomed the stately King, her father, surrounded by his faithful followers.

She felt a little sad, too, as she left her mother's side to steal away to meet the little Wishman. For the Queen looked lovely, and regal too, seated on her throne with her maidens around her, all busily plying their needles at the tapestry and embroidery.

Soft and sweet, too, was the music the minstrel

made. Christina crept slowly down the broad terrace steps—for the last time.

The peacocks roused themselves to shriek a harsh welcome, and spread their lordly tails for admiration. The fountains splashed musically into the marble basins, and the roses nodded in the evening breeze. The greensward was so velvety that it did not betray her footsteps. As she crept out at the stable gate to avoid the sentry, her own pet steed heard her and neighed eagerly. Princess Christina walked very slowly now. When she came to the common, Janet the goose-girl stood at her gate, holding it open but not passing out.

The little thatched cottage looked very cosy in the twilight, for Granfer had lighted the lamps early, and the lighted window gave a bright welcome to passers-by. The old man was busily sorting herbs, for he knew a bit about plants, and made up useful salves for cuts and bruises. The foxglove by the gate still held a sleepy bee imprisoned in its glove-shaped blossom, and the humming-bird moths fluttered ceaselessly over the sweet-scented evening stock. It all looked so homely that Janet shut the gate and walked into the cottage again.

Christina paused: and then she turned round and hurried back to the palace.

The little Wishman sat still watching the colours fading out of the sky; he watched the stars come out; he heard the nightingales singing, and he saw the owls go silently forth in search of supper long after the swifts had ceased crying and circling overhead.

Then the moon rose, and the Wishman looked up at her as she floated across the dark-blue sky.

“ We know a great deal, you and I, Madam,” he said. “ You and I are very good friends, and we say very little about all that is said to us. Good night, Queen Moon,” and he jumped off the gate and went away through the wood singing:

“ If wishes were horses,
Then beggars would ride.
Oh! the wishboats that folk
Launch on the tide!
I really don’t know
What would happen—do you,
If all the folk’s wishes
Should one day come true?”

He never once looked for Princess Christina nor for Janet the goose-girl.

The old saying that you may see the little Wishman on Midsummer Eve an hour after sunset is still firmly believed.

It is whispered in the palace, where Christina lives and promises to be a good wise queen when her time comes. It is talked of openly in the thatched cottages in the village, especially in that one where Janet lives happily with old Granfer, tending her geese and her garden, though she still wears her old blue dress, and in the summer no shoes or stockings at all.

Helen Broadbent.

write in figs 2,777 $\{ = 2,777$

while the Division sign = $\frac{1}{1}$

$7 + 1 + 2 + 3 - 1 + 6 = 18$

add together 33333 $\{ = 15$

Take 88 from 888 = 800

How many ~~cents~~ cents in a dollar = 100

How many pence in a gallon $\{ = 160$

$(7 + 8 + 11 - 10) \times 2 = 24$

A box is full of pennies and halfpennies $\{ = 24$

How many pennies and halfpennies will there be if there is the same number of pennies as halfpennies $\{ = 4$

$$6+1+2-1+5=13$$

2 the figs. 35,707

$$10 \times 77 = 770$$

$$10 \times 54 = 540$$

$$5, division sign = \div$$

$$6, take sign = -$$

$$7, add sign = +$$

8, multiply sign = \times

$$2+1+1 \times 2 = 8$$

9, plus together

$$7777867 = 49$$

$$7+7+1+8+9 = 32$$

$$220-1-2-3=14$$

$$2 \times 1+2-1=3$$

$$7+1+8+8=25$$

15 How many
gallons in a
barrel

